

Other Flights (Terminal 2)		00:30	Amsterdam (K.L.)
00:40	Vienna (CS)	02:35	London (D.L.)
01:00	Rome, Rome (AZ)	02:40	Athens (Z.N.A.)
01:15	Dubai (EK)	HILAZ RAILWAY TRAIN	
01:30	Sana'a (YV)	Dep. Amman	8.00 a.m. every Monday
01:45	Larnaca (CY)	Arr. Damascus	5.15 a.m. every Monday
02:00	Beirut (ME)	Dep. Amman	7.45 a.m. every Monday
02:00	Paris, Damascus (AF)	Arr. Damascus	6.15 p.m. every Sunday
02:30	Cairo (MS)		
02:45	London (B.A.)		
03:00	Athens (Z.N.A.)		
03:30	Amsterdam (K.L.)		
MARKET PRICES			
<i>Upper/lower price in kils per kg</i>			
DEPARTURES			
Royal Jordanian (R.J.)			
Flights (Terminal 1)			
00:40	Beirut (R.J.)	Apple	700-900
01:15	Amsterdam, New York (R.J.)	Banana	600
01:30	Geneva, Madrid (R.J.)	Isatana (Mushamri)	120
01:40	Paris, Brussels (R.J.)	Cabbage	240-250
01:45	London (R.J.)	Corn	200-180
02:00	Beirut (R.J.)	Cauliflower	440-430
02:00	Bahrain, Doha (R.J.)	Chicantene	340-330
02:00	Larnaca (R.J.)	Cauliflower (large)	300-290
02:30	Jeddah (R.J.)	Cauliflowers (small)	300-290
02:30	Damascus (R.J.)	Eggplant	350-340
02:35	Alfa Dhabi, Dubai (R.J.)	Garlic	550-460
		Grape Fruit	250-180
		Lemon	280-190
		Marrow (large)	250-180
		Marrow (small)	400-350
		Onion (green)	120-100
		Onion (dry)	400-350
		Orange	500-350
		Pepper (small)	400-350
		Pepper (sweet)	300-300
		Potato	800-300
		Radish	200-150
		Spinach	520-200
		Sprng Beans	340-340
		Tomato	400-340

Regent condoles Shreideh family

DEIR ABI SAEED (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Thursday visited the Shreideh family at Deir Abi Saeed near Irbid and conveyed to them condolences from His Majesty King Hussein over the death of Captain Bilal Abdul Majid Shreideh who died in a plane crash at Marka Airport Wednesday.

His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein attended the funeral of Capt. Shreideh who was a Royal Falcons pilot.

The 29-year-old pilot was on take-off from Marka Airport at about 1:00 p.m. Wednesday when his single-seat Extra 300 dove to the ground. Capt. Shreideh, who leaves a wife and infant daughter, was laid to rest in his hometown of Deir Abi Saeed.

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad delegated the director of the Irbid Police Department to convey his condolences to the Shreideh family.



Malaysian students of AL al Bayt University Thursday recite Islamic songs during a ceremony marking Al Isra Wal Miraj (Petra photo)

Malaysian students take part in marking Islamic holiday

AMMAN (J.T.) — As part of Jordan's observance of Al Isra Wal Miraj, Malaysian students of Al al Bayt University recited Islamic songs in a ceremony held at the university Thursday.

At the ceremony, which was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, university President Mohammad Adnan Al Bakht said the Israel (Prophet Mohammad's nocturnal journey from Al Masjid Al Haram in Medina Munawwarah in Saudi Arabia to Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem), represents the first spiritual conquest of Jerusalem and the first eternal relationship between Al al Bayt (the Hashemites) and Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

Also addressing the ceremony were President of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research (Al al Bayt Foundation) Naseruddin Al Assad, Chief Islamic Justice Sheikh Nooh Salim and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Al Abbadi, who all highlighted the occasion and stressed the eternal relation between Jerusalem and Al al Bayt.

Following the ceremony, Prince Hassan and the audience attended noon prayers at Bilal Ben Rahab Mosque at the university.

The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, advisors to His Majesty King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, Cabinet ministers and senior civil and military officials.

In Amman, His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein deputised for the King, who is in Austria receiving treatment for an ear infection, and attended a major ceremony held at King Abdullah Mosque in Abdali.

Addressing the ceremony, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Al Abbadi reviewed the great meanings and implications of this occasion, particularly at this time, when our nation is facing many challenges, he said.

Also addressing the congregation was member of the Upper House of Parliament Kamel Al Sharif, who said that Al Isra Wal Miraj is one of the great occasions. It is a great spiritual experience which has significant meaning and implications, he said. The occasion stresses the status of Jerusalem and its importance to the Muslim Umma.

He praised the role played by the Hashemites in safeguarding the holy places in Jerusalem.

Jordan hopes for economic prosperity in '95

Officials caution against immediate expectations urging more debt reduction, private sector initiative

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan enters 1995 with hopes high that its new found peace with Israel would bring in increased economic dividends but with strong caution that the fruits of peace could not be reflected in the lives of people overnight.

Complaints are loud that Jordanians failed to see any significant improvement in their standard of living and that prices rose dramatically during the year.

Officials argue that the expectations were too high and unrealistic in terms of quick changes in living standards.

The rise in market prices, they say, is the result of one-time economic adjustments to improve the image of Jordan and make its policies internationally compatible at a time when the Kingdom needs to project itself as a haven for foreign investments.

Jordan, which began 1994 with over \$6.8 billion in foreign debts, enters the new year with \$830 million of the debts being written off and nearly \$3 billion rescheduled.

For all technical purposes, the Kingdom does not have any major debt servicing obligations in 1995-1997, but that is not simply enough to attract the foreign investments it badly needs to address the problems of unemployment and poverty.

Essentially, it would mean reducing the foreign debts by at least half, an objective that the government has set its eyes on in 1995. Most of the creditors of the Kingdom — not to mention the U.S., the United Kingdom and Germany which have already extended write-offs — have responded positively, at least verbally, to its call for debt relief, but concrete steps have yet to materialise.

Amman is also hopeful that its request for economic and military assistance (\$2.5 billion per year for the next 10 years) from the U.S. along the lines Washington extended to Egypt and Israel after their 1978 Camp David agreements, would meet with success in 1995.

But no-one is able to foresee with any degree of accuracy the level of American assistance to Jordan. "It all depends on how the U.S. Congress views the need to support and maintain the state of peace between Jordan and Israel and how far Washington lawmakers are convinced of the Jordanian argument that improvement in the standard of living of its people is vital for peace to hold and sustain itself," said a senior official.

Nothing was definite for Jordan when it entered 1994. It watched with apprehension

the course of the Palestinian-Israeli autonomy deal while the Jordanian-Israeli track remained largely neglected with little sign that Israelis were serious in engaging the Kingdom in substantial negotiations.

The common agenda that Jordan and Israel signed on Sept. 14, 1993, one day after the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel formalised their autonomy deal, remained nothing more than a document, although the option was available to Jordan to accept some of the terms set by Israel and sign a peace treaty.

Focus on foreign investment

After signing the peace treaty on Oct. 26, 1994, under which it secured its territorial water rights and addressed its security concerns, Jordan focussed on making itself an attractive target for foreign and local investment.

One week after signing the peace accord, Jordan went to the Casablanca economic conference on the Middle East and North Africa with proposals for projects worth \$15 billion.

Most of the projects presented at the Oct. 30-Nov. 1 conference were of a regional nature, involving benefits for all in the immediate region. Others were more national and related to infrastructure within the country with options open for foreign investment.

Casablanca put Jordan on the economic map of the Middle East and defined its priorities. Officials who represented Jordan at the conference say that the very objective of the exercise — to bring a fresh limelight on the Kingdom and the opportunities available here — was achieved, and that Jordan did not expect announcements of billions of dollars of foreign investment in the country at the meeting.

The Kingdom is now preparing for a follow-up conference to be held in Amman in the second half of 1995 with hopes that by that time ideas and proposals made in Casablanca would have been discussed in depth, and foreign investors would be more interested in bringing capital to the country.

But, Jordanian economic strategists agree, political stability resulting from the peace treaty and the democratisation process launched in 1989 are simply not enough to attract foreign investors particularly that the international competition for foreign capital is becoming stiff and fierce.

Cutting bureaucracy, raising incentives
Spurred by this awareness,

the government has moved steadily towards cutting down on bureaucracy and increasing incentives for foreign capital by amending legislation. A draft law on investment promotion prepared by the Royal Commission for Reform and Modernisation has been submitted to the government, incorporating added incentives to an amended draft legislation on companies and foreign investment.

The most concrete among the Jordanian moves in this context was the establishment of a "one-stop-window" for investors opened at the Investment Promotion Department.

Critics say, however, that the realisation that it is time for dramatic changes in Jordan's traditional approaches is limited to top-level thinking. They argue that the you-wait-while-I-take-a-nap mindset of medium- and junior-level bureaucrats has not changed much despite the efforts launched by the Royal Commission which is headed by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Information Minister Jawad Anani, appeared to this state of affairs when he emphasised the need for Jordanians "to work hard" to reap the benefits of peace. In a television interview broadcast on Thursday, Dr. Anani cautioned that the fruits of peace would not come on their own to Jordan without the Kingdom working to reap them.

Pinning hopes on the private sector

The Kingdom is pinning high hopes on the private sector to assume a leading role in investment projects. The 1993-1997 development plan prepared by the Ministry of Planning gives a lion's share to private sector investments in areas that include infrastructure.

Notwithstanding the unchanged belief of some businessmen that the state has to deliver projects to them on a silver platter, a recent gathering of regional businessmen held in Cairo under the auspices of the European Union (EU) showed that the Jordanian private sector was convinced that it had to take the initiative, participants say.

Jordanian businessmen who attended the Dec. 5-7 meeting in Cairo were "shocked in the positive sense" when they saw how their Israeli counterparts went about finalising deals with European counterparts without falling back on the government, said a participant.

"Sure enough, the shock was a catalyst in spurring

many of the businessmen to realise that they do not and should not depend on the government to lead them by the hand to projects," said the participant. "Of course, the government has to play a role, but the bulk of the work has to be undertaken by the private sector itself."

There is enough liquidity in the country for new investments, but commercial banks are unable to lend extra liquidity to new ventures if only because of a ceiling on credits imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The government says that it is trying to exempt credit facilities for industrial projects from the ceiling.

The government is also hopeful that the Palestine National Authority (PNA) would be more forthcoming in its perceptions of economic relations with Jordan in 1995 and would ratify an agreement the two sides drafted in 1994.

Tourism is an area that Jordan expected to see booming after the signing of the peace treaty. But, as it turned out, Israeli tourists visiting Jordan are spending little money in the Kingdom. The government is unable to do anything in this context. The Israeli government says that entry visa charges as well as admission fees to some of the tourist attractions in Jordan make up a good income for the Kingdom.

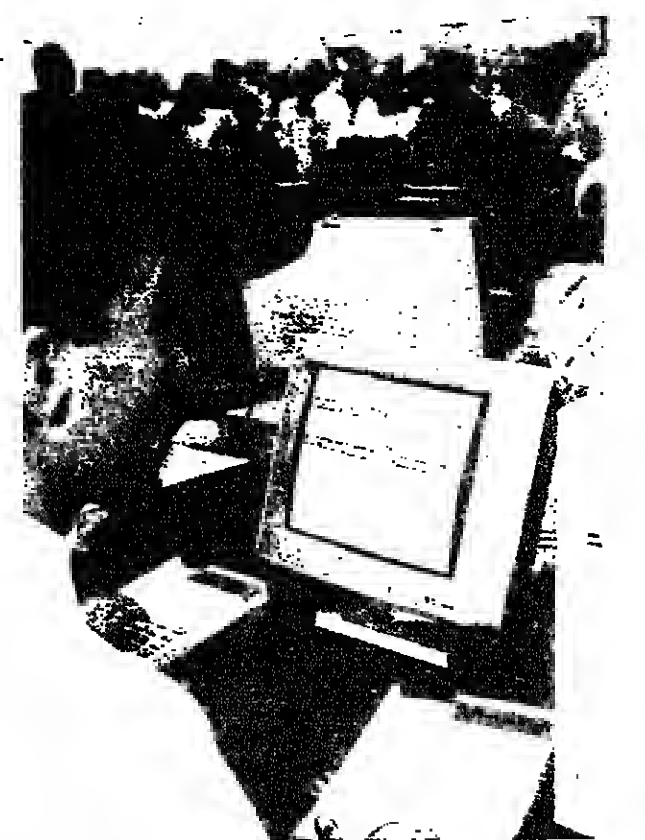
Annual economic growth is expected to be slightly less than six per cent, and inflation around four per cent during the year.

Exports are estimated to have risen to more than JD 2.5 billion during the year, registering a more than 10 per cent increase over 1993. Definite figures for imports are not yet available, but the final figure for the year is expected to be much higher than the JD 630 million registered during 1993.

Economic measures adopted in 1994

Among the major economic measures adopted by the government in 1994 were:

- Introduction of seven to 20 per cent sales tax to replace a consumption tax. The move, which drew heavy criticism, was, however, seen as a major step in revamping the taxation structure of the country. Changes in the income tax structure are being studied.
- Exempting all income from exports from the income tax.
- Rescheduling of \$1.3 billion in foreign debts.
- Securing \$830 million in debt write-off (including \$702 million from the U.S. in three years, \$74 million from the United Kingdom and \$50 million from Germany).



An employee registers transactions at the Amman Financial Market

— Increasing the pension and salaries of civil servants and servicemen. Teachers were given special consideration.

— Reducing customs duties on vehicles. Further reductions are expected next year.

— Moving to restructure financially troubled Royal Jordanian, the national carrier, by increasing its capital.

— Announcing moves to privatise the Telecommunications Corporation (TCC). A concession to install and operate Jordan's first cellular phone system was given to a local company in affiliation with an American giant.

— Undertaking moves to salvage some of the troubled state-owned enterprises.

— Launching moves to correct the imbalances and inefficiencies in the energy and water sectors.

— Preparing a draft budget for 1995 worth JD 1.674 billion with a JD 50 million deficit. The budget was approved unchanged by Parliament in return for a government undertaking to implement most of a list of 67 recommended reforms.

The reforms, if implemented, according to their proponents, would go a long way in correcting many "shortcomings" in the economy and their repercussions on the low-income group.

The Amman Financial Market (AFM), the Jordanian bourse that is widely seen as the main barometer for investor confidence, fared badly during the year.

Uncertainties of the peace

process and economic relations with the Palestine influenced and curbed growth of the market throughout the year. A further to investor scepticism that capital gains 'be subject to taxation changed legislation with less-than-anticipatory flow of foreign capital to the market. Dozens of companies also raised their capital under controlled measures drawing capital away from the immediate trading.

In the first six months of the year, the foreign change reserves of the Kingdom plunged by over \$300 million as a result of high demand for foreign currency and lower-than-expected expatriate remittances. Contrary to reports a gestions, the flow of currency to the West / exchange for dinars found to be insignificant.

The Central Bank (CBJ) said a month that it had managed to stabilise the reserves from the early-1993 \$600 million.

That indeed is a far from the zero reserves the CBJ had at the 1988, and a key indicator of the present monetary situation of the Kingdom, prompt any devaluation of the currency.

In fact, according to Governor Mohammed Nabulsi, the dinar is a higher exchange rate against most international currencies, but any valuation would reflect on the Kingdom's

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

FILMS

★ Triple features untitled "The Legend of Sleep Hollow," "Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day," and "The Wind in the Willows" at the American Centre on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

BAZAR CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

★ "Ramadan Charity Bazaar" at Al Ahliya School for Girls, Jabal Amman, First Circle (10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.)

★ Bani Hamida Christmas Display with a variety of small gift items at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, First Circle, Rainbow Street.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Exhibition of oil paintings by Mahmoud Mousa at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.

★ Plastic art exhibition by Laila Kawash at the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition of works by Mahmud Obeidi at Darat Al Funun. Also showing an exhibition of portraits by Fahrelnissa Zeid and the exhibition of contemporary Arab artists.

★ Exhibition of paintings by Ismail and Tammam Shammout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

★ Exhibition by artists Lattif Al Khateeb and Muhy Khateeb at the Housing Bank Gallery.

★ Exhibition at Mona Saudi's Studio, Abdoun Village — Tel.: 829700 until Dec. 31st, 1994.

French pilot

(Continued from page 12)

although Interior Minister Charles Pasqua said on Tuesday he was "pretty sure" the gunman's leader was named Abdullah Yahia.

Algeria has been in turmoil since the government called off a 1992 general election that the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win. About 20,000

people have been killed in the ensuing three years of civil strife.

An Algerian group warned Friday that it now had a "legal duty" to wage war on France in the wake of the bloody end to last week's Airbus hijack.

The Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) said in a newsletter published Friday that "war against France has become a legal duty" under Islamic Sharia law.



Wissam Boustany



Amira Fouad

Boustany, Fouad to ring in the New Year with a flute and piano recital

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Flute master Wissam Boustany is back in Jordan for an evening recital, this time with pianist Amira Fouad.

Under the patronage of H.R.H. Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, Al Hussein Society for the Rehabilitation of the Physically Handicapped, in cooperation with the British Council in Amman, and with special sponsorship by the Amman Marriott Hotel, has invited Mr. Boustany and Ms. Fouad to perform on Wednesday, Jan. 4 at the

Royal Cultural Centre (RCC).

Mr. Boustany's resume indicates that he performed in 1991 under the baton of the great Claudio Abbado. However, after a complete reading of the resume and the unanimous, superlative press critiques of the Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Times and others, one is tempted to re-arrange the sentence to read "Claudio Abbado had the pleasure and the honour to conduct Wissam Boustany."

Mr. Boustany and Ms. Fouad will play works by Donizetti, Doppler, Chopin,

Franck as well as Boustany's own compositions. Both performers are of Arab origin — Mr. Boustany is from Lebanon and a British citizen now, and Ms. Fouad was born in Scotland to Egyptian parents.

They have both lived and studied in Great Britain.

Wissam Boustany does not consider it sufficient to play with unsurpassed virtuosity, taste and musicianship, thus joining great flutists such as Jean-Pierre Rampal of France and others, he is also concerned with bringing to his audiences contemporary works through attractive

programmes.

Amira Fouad studied in Canada, England and France. She was the winner of the "Young Artist Competition," and has played and recorded in solo recitals in Canada. Ms. Fouad, has also performed with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra.

The Canadian "Kingston Whiting Standard," of Ontario, wrote about her: "...The freshness of youth... plus a brilliant technique..."

The new year could not start with musicians of higher standards than Mr. Boustany and Ms. Fouad.

Trucks to be allowed on old road to Aqaba

AQABA (Petra) — In response to truck drivers' protests about unsafe conditions of the ring road around the port city of Aqaba, Minister of Transport Samir Kaware announced that trucks can will now be allowed to use the old road to Aqaba at night.

The announcement was made following an inspection tour of the Aqaba region and the ring road by Mr. Kaware and the interior and public works minister.

Trucks drivers commuting between Aqaba and Amman last week staged a strike saying that "the death road" was responsible for the death of 21 of their colleagues this year.

In a statement, end of his tour in Aqaba, Mr. Kaware said trucks would be allowed on the old road into and out of the city between 8:00 and 7:00 a.m.

He also announced that the Ministry of Public Works will take measures to improve conditions on the 13 kilometre ring road as soon as possible.

Mr. Kaware said that the Council of Ministers will soon order trucks to reduce their weight to 13 axles under the previous regulations.

OBITUARY

The Chechen and the North Caucasian community in Jordan mourn the death of American photographer/journalist,

CYNTHIA ELBAU — a sister who shared the death and the family and the American people.

Tel/Fax 6-8315

1. Korea frees U.S. pilot

MUNJOM, Korea (R) — North Korea Friday freed a U.S. helicopter pilot it had held for 13 days, allowing him to fly home to Florida for Year's Day and keeping its nuclear deal with the United States.

Chief Warrant Officer Hall looked pale and tired and was wearing the flying suit he wore in his helicopter when it was shot down in North Korea on Jan. 17 as he crossed the heavily fortified Korean border into South Korea in the morning.

Mr. Hall, 20, flew to a medical check-up, a briefing, and then left the United States in the morning.

President Bill Clinton extended his relief at Officer Hall's release. He said he had met with Officer Hall in the White House, and that Officer Hall had said he was well. Brooksville, Florida.

Mr. Hall's family wept and hugged one another when they learned he was home.

faithfully implemented its part of the agreed framework and we believe that it is in our interest that we do the same and we are therefore pleased that we can now look to the future and implement the important project."

Under the accord reached in October, designed to eliminate North Korea's ability to produce nuclear arms, Washington is to arrange the supply to Pyongyang of new nuclear reactors costing \$4 billion and interim supplies of fuel oil.

The two countries also agreed to take steps towards establishing normal diplomatic relations.

Mr. Hubbard said he had "two rather difficult days" in Pyongyang working for Officer Hall's release, but he had cut no deals.

Pyongyang says it brought down the U.S. helicopter with one shot and Officer Hall's co-pilot David Hilemon, whose body was handed over last week, was killed in the crash.

It accused the Americans of espionage and issued what it described as Officer Hall's confession to "illegal intrusion." Washington says the helicopter strayed across the border accidentally.

Mr. Clinton also said the United States had given up nothing in the agreement that secured Officer Hall's release.

"Chief Warrant Officer Hall was held for too long after his helicopter strayed off course on a routine training mission. But we are very glad that he has been released and is now in freedom," he said.

Mr. Clinton rejected a suggestion that the deal meant Washington's ally, South Korea, would be cut out of future U.S. contacts with the North, which Seoul strongly resists.

"The terms of the agreement are clear from their own words. We were faithful to all of our commitments to our allies and to our commitments to our own policies," Mr. Clinton said.

Mr. Hubbard said the United States had not negotiated for Officer Hall's release, but only stated its case and expressed its "sincere regrets" for the "accidental intrusion."

Pyongyang Radio, monitored in Tokyo Friday said North Korea agreed to return Officer Hall because the United States had "accepted our demand."

"North Korea asked for, and the United States agreed to, further bilateral military contacts to prevent incidents which threaten peace and security on the Korean peninsula."

"The United States also agreed to our demand to give

necessary cooperation so that unconverted prisoners of war (North Korean soldiers held by South Korea) can be returned home quickly," it said.

In Seoul, Mr. Hubbard expressly denied there had been or would be bilateral military contacts with the North, and said the prisoner of war issue was for the two Koreas to discuss.

The U.S. military says contacts between North Korean and U.S. army officers over Officer Hall were carried out on the U.S. side under the auspices of the U.N. Command in Korea, which supervises the Korean War armistice.

White House officials said Mr. Clinton spoke to South Korean President Kim Young-Sam and stressed that the nuclear agreement was not altered by the arrangement freeing Officer Hall.

Seoul welcomed the release but urged Pyongyang to resume dialogue with the South to ease tensions. The two Koreas are still technically at war since their 1950-53 conflict, as no peace treaty has ever been signed by them.

The helicopter incident had prompted an angry response from many U.S. congressmen, who said unless Officer Hall was freed quickly it would threaten the nuclear agreement.



Parliament Speaker Sheikh Russak Ali (center) holds resignation letter of the opposition Awami League. On the right is league chief Sheikh Hasina Wajed. The opposition said 147 MPs resigned, instead of 152 as some would follow suit in the next several days. The resignation came after last-ditch efforts failed to end a nine-month standstill (AFP photo)

Bangladesh political crisis lumbers on after Zia olive branch rejected

DHAKA (AFP) — A political crisis that has wracked Bangladesh since March appeared far from resolution Friday, as opposition MPs rejected an olive branch held out by Prime Minister Khalesa Zia.

"We have already asked for the government's immediate resignation and the holding of fresh elections," an opposition official told AFP, rejecting Mrs. Zia's offer to step down in 1996, 30 days before the country's next scheduled polls.

Mohammad Nazim of the Awami League told AFP that opposition MPs would also not reconsider their mass resignation from parliament Wednesday, despite a plea from Mrs. Zia to assuage their fears "for the sake of the country."

Mr. Nazim said there had been no contact between the opposition and government overnight and that all previous offers from the ruling party were "dead."

Government and ruling party officials were unavailable for comment Friday.

The three main opposition groups Wednesday headed in resignation papers from 147 MPs accusing the government of failing to accept a nine-month-old demand that Mrs. Zia step down and agree to new elections under a neutral administration.

Mrs. Zia's offer to step down prior to the 1996 elections and her surprise appeal to the opposition came against the backdrop of an opposition-called general strike in the capital Thursday, and a legal controversy over the resignations.

Parliamentary Speaker Sheikh Russak Ali said he received the resignation letter from the MPs in three bundles, adding that he would have to look at each document individually since they were not presented to him in person.

Bangladesh's constitution requires MPs personally to hand in a letter of resignation to the speaker.

Source said Mr. Ali, who is currently out of the capital, had sought legal advice on the controversy and would return here Saturday to give his ruling.

The sources also said some opposition MPs had contacted Mr. Ali after the mass resignation expressing a desire to keep their seats.

Of the 147 MPs, only the resignation of Salauddin Qader Chowdhury, from the National Democratic Party, was accepted as he personally gave notice to Mr. Ali.

Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina Wajed said Thursday that the MPs would reconsider their stand if their demands were met by the government, but did not say if this included an end to the current parliamentary crisis.

Reacting to news of Mrs. Zia's offer, Mr. Nazim said it was "morally impossible to accept" as the MPs had already tendered their resignations.

The reaction by the local press Friday to the political impasse was pessimistic, with the Star daily saying in an editorial that the nation had been plunged "into a fathomless pit of uncertainty."

"The feeling is one of being led up to a pasture of hope and then suddenly we find the ladder (doomed) to fall," it said.

But the Bangladesh Observer for its part said it hoped "the process of dialogue aimed at a reasonable solution of the problem will be revived in a spirit of give and take."

"Both the government and the parties in opposition owe a great deal to the people whose fundamental rights and interests should not only be protected but advanced with positive actions," it said.

The political standoff began with an opposition boycott of parliament in March, with each side the other of sinking efforts to end the crisis.

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Clinton expects to seek reelection

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. President Bill Clinton, vowing to champion his agenda over his low popularity said Thursday he intends to seek reelection in 1996.

Clinton said he could not see anything that would make him change his mind.

Clinton said he would have taken on all these tough battles and all the interest groups I've taken on the last two years," Mr. Clinton said.

Asked if he could think of "any reasons" that would keep him from seeking a second term in 1996, Mr. Clinton replied: "No, I have my health, and I'm doing a good job."

The declaration of his intentions, coming two years before Mr. Clinton's term ends, was unusual. Most incumbent presidents tend to qualify their plans more than Mr. Clinton did in the interview with news reporters, Mr. Clinton said.

"I'm just going to do my very best job. I do my very best to tend to seek reelection that is not uppermy mind."

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view, often waiting until the year of the election before bluntly stating their candidacy.

In the wake of the Republican landslide in the November congressional and gubernatorial elections, there has been speculation among some Democratic officials and political experts that Mr. Clinton might decide not to seek a second term.

Mr. Clinton brushed aside the possibility that he might be challenged for his party's nomination, saying: "I don't know and I'm not worried about it."

Major optimistic for U.K. in 1995

LONDON (AFP) — Prime Minister John Major Friday voiced optimism for Britain in 1995, ascribing persistent economic woes to his decision to go for long-term growth rather than a popular, but "dangerous," short-term fix.

In a wide-ranging end-of-year BBC interview recorded earlier, Mr. Major also reaffirmed his commitment to a unified Europe, saying there would be no concessions to the nine Conservative Party Euro-skeels who have divided his party.

"There is a sea change," he said. "The high tide of federalism in Europe has been reached and is declining. There are still enthusiasts who will argue for it, but I do not myself believe that they will carry the day."

"The argument that we should be in Europe, fighting for the sort of Europe we care about, will carry the day because I believe that is the majority view amongst the British people."

Mr. Major also said he was confident that lasting peace in Northern Ireland was at hand, the will of the people to end violence serving as "a very powerful impetus" towards a political settlement.

Asked about a scathing year of political misfortune that left him and his government at the bottom of opinion polls, Mr. Major said: "Politics is sometimes a bumpy ride. If you're prepared to accept the bumps, don't go in for the ride."

The current economic difficulties were the result of problems going back five years, said Mr. Major, adding that the fruits of recovery had not yet reached people's pockets because the four per cent growth had mainly gone to investment.

"My concern has always been what is right for the country and that is the way we will determine future policy," he said.

Mandela hails an 'epoch-making' 1994

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela Friday hailed 1994 as an "epoch-making" year for South Africa, marking the end of apartheid and the beginning of a new era of peace and reconciliation.

Mandela said the year had been "a year of significant achievement, a year of peace and reconciliation, a year of hope and optimism."

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and had made "significant progress."

"A national consensus has been forged on the policy to bring a better life to all South Africans," he said, adding that all seven parties that made up the government of national unity were united behind the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to wipe out the injustices of apartheid.

The ANC won 62.6 per cent of the vote and dominates the National Assembly, followed by the former ruling National Party, the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party and four other smaller parties.

Listing his government's achievements, Mr. Mandela said initial plans to imple-

ment RDP projects had been taken and others would make an early start next year.

"In 1995 the government will adopt fiscal policies marking a departure from the days of apartheid," he said. "Uplifting living conditions will be a priority."

The Constitutional court to promote human rights has been introduced, land reform had begun in earnest and a legislative programme to ease the way to institutional change was well in hand, he said.

"These achievements are a tribute to the glorious people we are," he said. "As we enter this New Year I wish to congratulate all South Africans on their selfless efforts to make this possible."

CIA director Woolsey resigns — Clinton

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton has announced that Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director James Woolsey had resigned.

A statement released by the White House said Mr. Clinton had accepted with regret Mr. Woolsey's resignation and praised his accomplishments in advancing the transformation of U.S. intelligence in the aftermath of the cold war.

The announcement was not entirely a surprise, said Washington. Mr. Woolsey's resignation had been expected for some time, and morale had dropped at the agency after the scandal surrounding Aldrich Ames, a CIA employee convicted of spying for Moscow.

"Jim Woolsey has been a staunch advocate of maintaining an intelligence capability that is second to none," Mr. Clinton said in the statement.

"He has taken initiatives to streamline and improve collection, analysis and dissemination of intelligence, and he has been a strong supporter of the CIA's efforts to ensure the integrity of the CIA's operations."

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Politics threaten S. African 'miracle'

JESBURG (AFP) — A peaceful end of 300 years of white rule, a new government, a new flag and a new world: South Africans dub "The Year of the Rainbow Nation."

South Africans successfully steered through the early transition from apartheid to a multi-party democracy, however, President Mandela now faces more daunting challenges as he leads the young nation into the future.

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uniting all sectors of society behind Mr. Mandela's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

The programme aims in five years to create 2.5 million jobs, build one million houses and electrify another 2.5 million, provide 10 years of free education to all and redistribute 30 per cent of all farmland to blacks.

After seven months, however, there is little concrete evidence that the government will come anywhere near meeting these targets.

"At the moment, (the RDP) is little more than a mantra in the public mind, chanted in expectation of magical delivery," said journalist and political commentator Alistair Sparks in a recent article.

"For the most part, the policy stage has been completed," he added. "Now the policies must be implemented. It is delivery time."

He warned that the programme must be restructured "to make some quick and highly visible deliveries" if popular expectations are not to reach crisis level.

If deliveries are not forthcoming, he added, "the impatience will grow and may well start developing into overtone," eventually leading to "the kind of racial confrontation that has always been this country's worst-case scenario."

Another commentator, Kaizer Nyatumba of the Johannesburg Star, warned that a "new mood" had replaced the euphoria that swept black townships after April's historic all-race elections through Mr. Mandela to

power.

"Some people in the black community are beginning to feel they have been cheated," Mr. Nyatumba wrote, "because there is a strong perception that the concerns of the white business communities have so far received priority at the expense of those people gave the ANC almost a two-thirds majority in the election."

Mr. Mandela, during the ANC's national conference from Dec. 17-21, denied that the government was pandering to whites at the expense of blacks, saying that the policy of reconciliation had been given priority during the first seven months of his government in order to soothe long-standing racial hatreds.

Now, however, he added, it was time for "visible" change in the lives of black people.

Acknowledging delays in implementing the programme, Mr. Mandela called for patience, saying his government had been saddled with economic problems created by the previous white minority government.

He also said the programme was long-term and needed careful planning.

"Ours is not a programme of quick handouts but one of serious and lasting transformation," Mr. Mandela said.

Commentators question, however, whether it is not already too late for the ANC to avoid a backlash from the millions of homeless, jobless and hungry when it comes to voting in the crucial country-wide municipal elections scheduled for next October.

Truce violations reported in Liberia

MONROVIA (AFP) — Renewed clashes between Liberia's armed factions were reported less than 24 hours after a ceasefire came into effect to end five years of civil war, U.N. sources said Friday.

However, a U.N. official put the incidents down to a "communication problem" and said there was "no need for alarm" as some fighters may not yet know about the ceasefire.

Clashes were reported Thursday in the southeastern Rivercess County between Charles Taylor's National

Patriotic Front (NPFL) and the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) several hours after the ceasefire took effect at midnight Wednesday.

Each faction has blamed the other for the incident. An LPC official claimed "the ceasefire had to be broken" due to an "unprovoked attack" by NPFL gunmen.

But NPFL officials said the LPC launched the attack across a major highway.

Fighting between the two factions has also been reported in the southeastern Grand Bassa County, according to military sources in the capital.

The NPFL has clashed with Roosevelt Johnson's Krahn wing of the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) at Bong Mines, 75 kilometres (45 miles) north of Monrovia. Johnson confirmed the report but said he had told his men to respect the ceasefire.

Under the ceasefire agreement reached in Ghana, which currently chairs the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Liberia's warlords are to continue informing their fighters about the ceasefire until Jan. 11.

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European Union becomes 15 on Jan. 1

BRUSSELS (AFP) — When Austria, Finland and Sweden join the European Union (EU) on New Year's Day, raising EU membership to 15 nations, the community will stretch from the Atlantic to the Hungarian border and from the Peloponnese to the Arctic Circle.

Unlike in 1986, when Portugal and Spain joined, the new enlargement entails much more ambitious aims: to create a real union which has its own foreign policy and joint security, plus a single currency, before the end of the century in keeping with the Maastricht Treaty.

The new grouping with more than 370 million people will from the start comprise an economic area without internal borders, with freedom of movement for capital, goods and services.

In an initial phase due to start soon, there will be freedom of movement for people without identity checks among seven countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

It took almost 10 years to arrange for Portuguese and Spanish entry, but negotiations with the three newcomers took barely one year.

They are strong countries with a strong democratic tradition and are leaders in social security and protection of the environment.

Having to accept EU regulations posed no problem. On the contrary, their arrival ought to impel the 12 to make up for lost time, particularly in environmental matters.

A four-year transitional period has been set to adapt EU legislation to the higher standards of the new members.

For trade and the economy, the newcomers' membership of the European Economic Area along with Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway has greatly facilitated entry to the EU single big market.

Agriculture and regional aid were the toughest items on the agenda, requiring marathon negotiations early this year.

To avoid too painful a shock to their farmers, who get payments up to twice the rate of EU common agricultural policy tariffs, Austria and Finland are being allowed to continue payments for a while, on a decreasing scale.

Sweden has already adjusted its farm payments system and will get financial compensation in recognition of its efforts.

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Bardot quits Saint-Tropez

TOULON, France (AFP) — French actress and animal rights campaigner Brigitte Bardot said Thursday she is quitting Saint-Tropez, the French Riviera fishing village her presence transformed into a playground of the rich and famous. Bardot told a news conference that her Paris-based animal rights foundation now took up so much time that it was a handicap for her to be so far away.

Bardot said: "Saint-Tropez is no longer Saint-Tropez for me," she said, adding: "Everything has changed too much." A victim of its own success, Saint-Tropez is now a magnet for backpackers and the budget end of the holiday market. Bardot walked out on Saint-Tropez last June amid a highly-publicized row with Mayor Jean-Michel Couve, vowing not to return until he left office, in protest at the council's decision to let one of its halls to a hunters' convention. Reports said Mr. Couve had finally managed to mollify her by seeking her advice on what to do about the pigeons that were becoming a pest in the town. She spent Christmas with her husband Bernard d'Ormal and friends at her villa at La Madrague on the outskirts of Saint-Tropez, and camped an "Animals' Christmas" at nearby Hyeres Thursday. She made a plea for homes for neglected animals and campaigned for low-cost sterilisation of animals to stop the procreation of unwanted pets.

Row erupts after no winners in Manila filmfest

MANILA (R) — Judges at an annual Philippine Film Festival have refused to hand out award for best picture and director, saying none of the entries were good enough. Mano Hernandez, a film critic and one of the judges, told a television station Wednesday that all six films failed to make a mark.

"We wanted to send a message to the producers that the quality of the movies should be improved. They should not make films just for the sake of participating. This has been the weakest filmfest in terms of quality," he said.

Only the awards for best actor and actress were handed out to virtual unknowns. Philippine films, frequently made on the cheap, are typically comedy or action tales that glorify violence. The decision of the jurors Tuesday evening, which left movie producers and directors speechless, came a few months after a scandal rocked the intrigue-ridden Philippine industry. Actress Ruffa Gutierrez, powerful movie manager Lolit Solis and two other actors are on trial accused of plotting to rig awards for best actor and actress in another film festival in June. Gutierrez, Solis and another actor deny fraud charges over the alleged switch of envelopes containing the names of the winners.

Officials of an auditing company which counted the ballots of the judge on Tuesday night stood behind the presenters to make sure the right name was announced.

Royal Navy offers sailors wine

LONDON (R) — Sailors in Britain's Royal Navy can now switch their daily drink ration from beer to wine. One of the reasons cited for the decision is the presence of 40,000 WRENS in the Navy. The move, announced in the navy newspaper, won immediate plaudits. One woman serving on the aircraft carrier Ark Royal said: "Most of the girls prefer wine. It's more feminine." In 1970, the navy dropped a 300-year-old tradition of giving sailors a daily tot of rum.

Mother of 12 denied French big family medal

PARIS (R) — A French woman with 12 children accused the government of hard-heartedness for refusing her a gold medal awarded to mothers of big families. Solange Clarenne, 73, had five of her children before she married their father, disqualifying her from getting the medal automatically awarded to women with eight or more children born in wedlock. "I was a good mother... my children have no reason to reproach me. I've done what I can for them," she told France's TF1 television in an interview in her home in the eastern French region of Meurthe et Moselle.



Rose presses on with Bosnia truce mission

SARAJEVO (R) — United Nations chief in Bosnia Friday pressed ahead with efforts to persuade the warring factions to agree a four-month ceasefire aimed at paving the way to a political settlement of the 33-month war.

Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, commander of U.N. forces in Bosnia, held nearly three hours of talks in Sarajevo with Bosnian Vice-President Ejup Ganic and other members of the Muslim-led government.

His immediate superior, General Bertrand De Lapresle, was planning an appeal to rebel Serbs in Croatia in an attempt to bring them into a ceasefire process they have so far ignored.

Gen. Rose's discussions in the Bosnian capital were intended to hammer out remaining details of the ceasefire deal, under which U.N. troops would police buffer zones between the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian government forces.

United Nations spokesman Alex Ivanko told reporters more talks might be needed to finalise matters.

"Another meeting may be necessary to facilitate the full text of the cessation of hostilities agreement," he said, but added: "UNPROFOR (the U.N. Protection Force) still believes an agreement can be signed tomorrow or Sunday."

The proposed four-month ceasefire was the result of a freelance peace mission to Bosnia earlier this month by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Mr. Carter negotiated a seven-day Christmas ceasefire which stopped most of the fighting in Bosnia except



Santa Claus gives New Year gift-parcels to children in a Sarajevo theatre, in a traditional delivery prepared for children of the theatre employees (AFP photo)

for the Bihac enclave where Croatian Serb and rebel Muslim forces joined attacks on government troops.

The seven-day truce was intended to allow time for talks on the wider, four-month ceasefire.

Gen. Rose and Bosnian Serb military commander General Ratko Mladic said after a meeting Thursday that they still hoped to meet the scheduled Jan. 1 deadline for signing the ceasefire agreement.

Commenting on Gen. Rose's talks in Pale, Mr. Ivanko said: "Significant progress was made in reconciling the draft cessation of hostilities agreement. An

amalgamated text was agreed upon with the Bosnian Serb authorities."

He said Gen. Rose then met Mr. Ganic and other Bosnian officials in Sarajevo and presented them with the revised text of the cessation of hostilities agreement.

Mr. Ivanko added: "The Bosnian government also provided UNPROFOR with its own draft of such an agreement based on previous UNPROFOR drafts. UNPROFOR is now comparing these two drafts and trying to work out a common document."

The Bosnian government said it wants an end to fighting in the northwestern

Bosnian enclave of Bihac before it will agree the deal.

The United Nations pledged to make efforts to bring the Croatian Serbs, who are not a party to the truce and who have been attacking the Bihac enclave, into the ceasefire process.

Gen. De Lapresle, the overall U.N. military commander, said former Yugoslavians visiting rebel Croatian forces at their headquarters.

Mr. Ivanko said: "General De Lapresle is planning to visit Knin where he will meet local Arab authorities to try to convince them to respect the letter and spirit of the ceasefire agreement to which they are not signatories."

"UNPROFOR would like to stress the ceasefire continues to hold although violations are still being registered."

Major Herve Gourmelon, a U.N. military spokesman, said: "The area was very quiet throughout the day as the ceasefire continues to take effect. The Bihac pocket is still the most active area, especially around Velika Kladausa."

He said there had been 26 confirmed ceasefire violations across Bosnia over the past 24 hours, six determined to be of joint responsibility, four the fault of the Bosnian government army and 16 assessed as the fault of the Bosnian Serb Army.

Presidential poll will hamper France's EU role

PARIS (AFP) — France's six months in the EU chair starting on New Year's Day will be made more problematic by the election, due in April and May, of a successor to President Francois Mitterrand.

As president of the European Council, France will have to handle the arrival of Austria, Finland and Sweden, bringing European Union (EU) membership to 15 states, and work with a new EU Commission headed by newcomer Jacques Santer of Luxembourg, successor to the long-serving Jacques Delors of France.

To offset the vagaries of domestic politics, the government here has for some months already been coordinating work schedules with the outgoing Germans and the Spaniards who will take over the presidency in mid-year.

The watchword of the French stewardship would be continuity. Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said.

Government and diplomatic sources also expect the French to find time for their pet concerns of relations with Mediterranean states, security in Europe, and European cultural identity.

The timetable drawn up by Paris for meetings of the EU council of ministers is blank for six weeks in April and May because of the French presidential poll, with voting in two rounds on April 23 and May 7.

The winner will have precious little time to be briefed on chairing the EU heads of state and government summit in Cannes on the Riviera at the end of June, when there will be an end-of-term report on the French tenure.

European Affairs Minister Alain Lamassoure admitted the overlapping of European dates and French domestic affairs "will inevitably pose problems for us."

Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, favourite in the opinion polls to win the presidential race, will be expected to conduct government business as usual, while Mr. Juppe is heavily involved in promoting the presidential prospects of Mr. Balladur's rival Jacques Chirac, mayor of Paris.

Aftershocks hit quake-stricken Japanese city

HACHINOHE, Japan (R) — Strong aftershocks from a powerful earthquake rumbled through northern Japan Friday and were predicted to continue as residents rushed to clean up before the New Year holiday.

Shoppers buying in for the holiday filled the streets of central Hachinohe, a fishing port 400 kilometres north of Tokyo, which suffered widespread damage when a major quake struck off Japan's Pacific coast late Wednesday night.

As cleanup operations con-

tinued around the clock, city officials said they were worried by seismologists' predictions that aftershocks measuring as high as seven on the open-ended Richter Scale could occur for the next month.

"I'm not certain as to the scientific basis of the prediction, but as it was made by experts, I feel worried," Hachinohe Mayor Nobuo Nakasato told reporters after a government Earthquake Protection Agency Thursday forecast further tremors. "We're working all out to

restore calm for our citizens, but our opponent is nature," said the visibly tired Nakasato.

Japan's Meteorological Agency reported a total of 256 aftershocks of early Friday.

Wednesday's quake, which measured 7.5 on the open-ended Richter scale, killed two people and badly damaged houses, roads and railway sites around Hachinohe. Some 30,000 households in the city were still without water Friday. Hachinohe has a population of 420,000.

The mayor asked the national government to help tackle damage which city officials predicted would exceed 17 billion yen (\$170 million).

Police said the final casualty toll from the quake was 265 people, all but three of whom were in Hachinohe, and obituary areas of Aomori prefecture. The two people killed in the quake died when a pachinko (pinball) parlour collapsed.

Seismologists said the earthquake was probably triggered by slippage of tectonic plates along the huge trench known as the "Japan Deep".

Rao ousts challenger from campaign committee

NEW DELHI (R) — Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao axed challenger Arjun Singh from the Congress Party's Campaign Committee for February's state polls and signalled an imminent shake-up, party leaders said Friday.

Mr. Singh, a powerful party leader who had been included in all key campaign decisions so far, was kept out of the 26-member committee that will devise campaign strategy in five states voting in February, they said.

Congress, which lost power in three of four states that voted last month, faces serious challenges in the upcoming elections.

"Major changes in the party are due," Congress spokesman Ved Prakash told Reuters. "A reorganisation of the Congress (National) Committee is coming up."

Mr. Rao told the Times Of

India in an interview published Friday that he wanted to change the president of the party in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and other states.

It said he was likely to reshuffle his cabinet for New Year's Day.

The recent election defeats were compounded by the resignation last week of Mr. Singh, the human resource development minister, who criticised Mr. Rao's leadership for betraying the interests of the poor and minorities, traditional Congress supporters.

In his resignation letter, Mr. Singh said: "Adhocism and arbitrariness add the will to impose one's own decisions on party members in various states has totally paralysed the initiatives that party members take, and reduced the party to a state of inertia."

Several party leaders, while seeking disciplinary action against Mr. Singh for spreading rumours about the issues he was handling, said they were not prepared to apply the party's rules to him.

Sharad Pawar, chief minister of Maharashtra state, said after Mr. Singh's resignation.

Other ministers, plagued by scandals, also resigned last week, weakening Mr. Rao's position slightly ahead of the February elections that are only a year away from the central polls due in early 1996.

Mr. Rao, pressured by Mr. Singh and the opposition, removed Health Minister B. Shankaranand and Junior Rural Development Minister Rameshwar Thakur, both criticised by a parliamentary probe into a 1992 \$1.28-billion stock market scandal.

Food Minister Kalpana Rai, blamed in an official probe into a sugar import scandal, lost his job. The resignation of Civil Supplies Minister A.K. Antony, who also quit over the sugar scandal, has not yet been accepted.

In his resignation letter, Mr. Singh criticised the current economic reform programme initiated by Mr. Rao in 1991.

"A perception has emerged that liberalisation of economic policy perhaps has become liberalisation of corruption," he wrote.

Uttar Pradesh party chief Narain Dutt Tiwari said Mr. Rao should address himself "seriously" to the issues Mr. Singh raised. "What we need is a new look Congress Party," he said after Mr. Singh resigned.

Spanish row over anti-ETA operations deepens

MADRID (R) — Spain's minority Socialist government faced growing pressure Friday to respond to allegations that it masterminded illicit operations against Basque guerrilla sympathisers in the 1980s.

The Justice and Interior Minister, Juan Alberto Belloch, told a special session of the parliamentary committee which monitors his department: "We must respect the judicial process and assume the innocence of those involved."

But Antonio Romero of the United Left Movement called Mr. Belloch's presentation to the committee "empty of content" and Popular Party spokesman Francisco Alvarez Cascos said the government had to explain what it knew about the situation.

The arrest last week of Julian Sancristobal, a former head of state security who is suspected of links with the shadowy anti-terrorist Liberation Group (GAL), blew up into a political storm that has provoked opposition calls for an early general election

and caused turmoil in nervous financial markets.

Press interviews by two former policemen who were convicted in 1991 of GAL activities sought to implicate two ex-cabinet members.

One of the ex-ministers, Jose Barrionuevo, who once held the interior portfolio, has said he will sue for libel.

Opposition parliamentarians said today that government reticence over GAL could backfire on Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez.

Mr. Belloch was obliged to appear in parliament only after the Socialists' Catalan allies in parliament insisted. "I can say to you, Mr. Belloch, that if the judges condemn Sancristobal, it will be a political condemnation of Gonzalez," Mr. Alvarez Cascos said.

The probe into GAL, which began in 1983 and 1987, killed 18 people in a secret war on ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom), followed a series of corruption scandals that have progressively weakened Mr. Gonzalez's 12-

year old premiership.

But Mr. Belloch, who as a Basque country judge in the 1980s was among those who most fiercely attacked GAL activities, denied the government was obstructing investigations and promised full cooperation within the constraints of the law.

"My task is to convince you this ministry will collaborate fully with judges," he said, recalling the case before the courts.

He said that in his opinion the published interviews with former Bilbao Police Chief Jose Amedo and ex-Inspector Miguel Dominguez were contradictory. But, he added, this was up to the judges to assess.

Mr. Gonzalez, at a news conference Thursday, denied any government involvement in GAL activities. "Let this be one and for all clear, so as not to have to keep on insisting," he said.

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Urban projects with care

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan said it right. Any urban development project should focus first on its human dimension. These projects should provide people with homes that would cater for the needs of modern-day living, they should provide for shopping space, and they should include parks and playgrounds for adults and children.

It is unfortunate that most of our cities, including Amman, do not provide any of the required facilities to any satisfying degree.

More and more young Jordanians grow in need of new homes every year. The demand for housing is so strong that prices and rents are constantly going up. There are still so many extended families crammed under the same roof.

Decent urban housing projects are in dire need. More than a decade has passed since the building of a major housing project like that of Abu Nusseir.

Meanwhile, the capital city is expanding rapidly and steadily, but, unfortunately, only westwards, eating up fertile land that most appropriately could be a major agricultural resource. Meanwhile, the authorities, the Amman Greater Municipality and other municipal councils in the Kingdom seem unable to control this expansion. Nor are they being able to provide proper services for many of the new shopping and residential areas that are changing the landscape of the country. Worst of all, the authorities seem unable, or unwilling, to solve problems that face the thousands of children who spend the day chasing their footballs in the streets to the shouts and hoots of angry drivers.

Amman, for example, has thousands of empty lots that could be used either for constructing apartment-buildings or children's playgrounds.

We suggest that the municipality that has for the last year been busy widening streets to cater for cars' needs to pay some attention to the genuine requirements of the thousands of children who are deprived of basic leisure and sport facilities, such as playgrounds and parks. These are an essential component of a decent urban life.

Furthermore, all these projects that the Amman municipality and other councils talk of should be debated before they are put into effect and before we wake up to the warnings of other blunders like that of the Ministry of Interior junction that cost millions of dinars and failed to meet its objective.

Finally, more and more "urban" people should be involved in the planning and execution of civil projects to ensure a truly more urban, and healthy, environment for our children and adults alike.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

OWING TO pressure from Arab and Israeli protesters, the Israeli authorities have finally decided to call off the instruction of a settlement near Al Khader village near Bethlehem on the occupied West Bank, said Al Ra'i Daily. Expressing satisfaction over the Israeli government's decision, the paper hoped that similar moves would be made to deal with the scores of other Jewish settlements sitting the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. All the Jewish settlements set up on Arab land are illegal and have been condemned by the world community, but it is regrettable that the successive Israeli governments resort to building settlements in order to appease the extremist Zionists and in votes in the parliamentary elections, added the paper, pressing that the construction of Jewish settlements runs contrary to all peace agreements with the Arabs, the paper said that expansion of the existing settlements or the nation of new ones tend to undermine the peace process with the Palestinians. The paper said that the Israeli government ought to take corrective steps by reducing the presence of Jewish settlers on Arab lands and pulling Israeli troops from occupied territories so as to pave the way for a lasting peace.

COMMENTING on the daily carnage on the roads of Jordan, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily said that the present situation concerning traffic seems unsatisfactory to stop the road accidents or prevent reckless driving. Not only do these accidents take their toll on human life but they also cost the country millions of dinars in damaged property, said Zuhair Mahadin. The writer said not only do the police allow the heavy trucks and buses to race along the highways, causing one accident after another, but they also fail to stop reckless drivers or those vehicles which are in a state of disrepair. The writer further criticised the traffic police for who stop their cars outside a drug store to go to purchase urgent requirements for home. Traffic police tend to ignore those motorists who endanger the lives of other

Jordan Perspective

Rescuing the image of Islam

By Dr. Musa Kallad

THE HIJACK of an Air France airliner and the killing of four European priests in Algeria last week were the latest blows to Muslim efforts to repair the damaged image of Islam. Notwithstanding the diplomatic words of non-Muslim leaders from the West and East reflecting understanding of the fact that extremism is not an Islamic way of life, the reality remains that the average non-Muslim in the street would go by what he or she reads in the newspapers and see and hear on the electronic media. And it is an understatement that what the media projects today of Islam and Muslims is little close to the realities of what the Islamic faith advocates and what Islam stands for.

While one could not pinpoint the source of the sudden escalation of the phenomenon widely dubbed as Islamic extremism in the last three years, one could definitely look at the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York and the alleged conspiracy charges against a dozen or more Arab Muslims in the U.S. as a major landmark in the efforts of enemies of Islam to portray the faith as espousing terrorism. The series of attacks carried out by Middle Eastern groups clearly aimed at undermining the Arab-Israeli peace process added vivid colours to the monstrous image that Islam acquired in the West. By and large, this image was and is also part of the weak Arab position in peace negotiations with Israel.

We in Jordan had seen it coming decades ago. All we have to do is to recall the words of our leadership and intellectuals in the latter half of the century. Everyone of them has been warning that frustration over the failure to secure their legitimate rights, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere, and the sense of social injustice coupled with squalid living conditions in many parts of the Muslim World were pushing Muslims towards extremism. But then, such a course of events was not limited to Muslims; it is a natural phenomenon that is applicable to every human being who finds his or her rights being trampled upon, social injustice perpetrated by the state and children being denied their basic rights to enough food to survive let alone education and proper health services.

Algeria can be described as a classic case where the people were denied any means to express their fury and

frustration for many years. The system there did not allow much political participation on the part of the people except the pre-established groups. It was the accumulation of the frustration that we saw in the so-called food riots in Algeria in 1988-89. Surely, the intensity of the violence that we saw in Algeria reflected the built-up anger of the people. Had there been any means of significance for the Algerian people to express their sentiments and rejection of social injustice, then the strength of the voices from the Algerian streets that we heard would have been much more objective and balanced.

Indeed, political participation, in all senses of the words, also means avenues for people to speak their mind and come together to correct the imbalances in the society. That is one of the major safety valves for the survival of a country. It was the shortsightedness of the regimes in Algeria and elsewhere where we find extremism raising its ugly head that has led to the present situation. Quite simply, had there been a large measure of personal freedom and political pluralism in these countries, we would not have witnessed the painful despicable events related to Algeria last week.

That does not, in any way, justify the path of extremism and bloodshed adopted by hardline Islamic groups in Algeria to push their quest forward. For one thing, it is clear that these groups are a minority when it comes to their advocacy to take up arms against the state, the votes that they garnered in the annual elections in 1993 do not count for much if one were to interpret that as a sign that everyone who cast his or her votes in support of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) supports the bloody campaign waged by the group against the government. These votes only reflected the desire of the Algerian people for a change from the decades of injustices they suffered. They hoped for that change in the Islamic ideology, which was and is very much indigenous and with which they were very familiar. It was and is the twisted manifestations of violence that is alien to that ideology that are strange to the Algerian society today.

Indeed, there are many experts in the international political scene who argue that the entire concept of political

Islam, as advocated by the Algerian FIS and other similar groups elsewhere in the Arab World, would have shrunk altogether if only it was allowed a free rein for a few months. That is to say that, had the FIS been allowed to assume power in Algeria and given the freedom and, more significantly, the responsibility to correct the social injustices and address bread and butter issues in the country, then one would have seen the Algerian people clamouring for new elections in a very short span and the results of those elections would have been the end of groups advocating political Islam as the dominant political force in the country. But then, it did not happen. Today, the Algerian people, and by extension, the Islamic World at large is paying the price, albeit in differing currencies and terms.

What could we, in Jordan and elsewhere in the Muslim World who are pained by the forced twists given to our faith by extremist groups, do to correct the situation? We do have heads of state and intellectuals from all corners of the world making a clear distinction between Islam as a religion and the Islamic groups that have adopted violence as a means to achieve their political ends. But those words are not enough. We need to drive home the point to the hearts and minds of the world that Islam is a creative force that propagates love, justice and equality for all people and that violence is alien to the faith.

For us in Jordan, having made peace with Israel after decades of hostilities, it is of paramount importance that the correct image of Islam is sent across the world. Given the limited material resources that we have, it might seem an impossible task. But the very fact that the Jordanian society and political system have among them strong and matured groups that base their approach on political Islam but believe in democracy and pluralism is the first and foremost asset that we have in assuming the role of a launching pad for a well-orchestrated and focused effort to spread the real awareness of Islam and what the faith stands for. It is our responsibility and obligation to ourselves to assume the lead, and make sacrifices if necessary, in eliminating the dark patches that cloud our lives as Muslims.

Russia should remain strong, but not oppressive

By G.H. Jansen

PERHAPS THE striking feature of the turmoil stirred up by the Russian, or more correctly, Boris Yeltsin's, invasion of Chechnya is the way in which Russian opinion of the Chechens has swung over, in a matter of days, from being extremely critical and negative to being equally supportive and positive.

Until early this month "Chechen" was almost a term of abuse for Russians because, for the Russians, Chechens were, automatically, assumed to be crooks and gangsters and criminals. The Chechens had this evil reputation even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it became established after that collapse and with it the collapse of law and order and, almost, of civilised society in the major cities of Russia, particularly of Moscow and St. Petersburg. So powerful are the Chechens in the criminal underworld that when Greek Cypriot business started working in Moscow they found it necessary to set up their own gangs, recruited from the ones led by Chechens, to protect them from the regular mafia gangs of Chechens extorting protection money from the foreigners.

Hence when the White House rebellion collapsed in the summer of 1993 the Moscow police took advantage of the situation to clear up the city by massive deportations of Chechen and Georgian criminals from the capital city who, needless to say, soon bribed their way back to their former haunts.

Hostility between Russians and Chechens is an old story because it took the



Russian empire almost the whole of the last century to impose its rule effectively on the peoples, including the Chechens, of the mountainous Caucasus region. The Murid Uprising led by the great hero Shamil lasted from 1834-50 and there were numerous other uprisings; in 1865 no less than 40,000 Chechens went into exile in Turkey.

The Chechens were converted from Christianity to Islam in the 16th century and were and are devout Muslims of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. Sufi mysticism has always been popular in the Caucasus region and the Nakshabandi and Qadiri Tariqas or "brotherhoods", which have been particularly strong among the Chechens, provided the organised framework for the nationalist struggles.

Because of this background, Stalin, for no good reason, during World War II, when the Germans over-

ran the Caucasus, accused the Chechens of being pro-Germans and deported them en masse to Kazakhstan in Central Asia and ethnic Russians were sent in the Chechen area. Hence, when in 1957 the Chechens were allowed to return to their republic, they had to replace Russians causing much ill will that still exists today.

Accordingly, it was almost inevitable that when the USSR collapsed, Chechnya should declare itself independent under the leadership of General D. Dudayev. Mr. Yeltsin tolerated this act of defiance because Chechnya did not press its independence in any aggressive manner but a couple of months ago he seemed to have lost his patience with the Chechen people and has now sent his troops and armour and airforce to bring the Chechens to heel. Having learned nothing in Afghanistan of the power of

national feeling, the generals of the Russian high command were hopelessly over-optimistic about their ability to crush the Chechens easily and quickly — a couple of divisions could settle the matter in a few weeks time, they thought.

The Chechens backed up by the Russians in Russia who were with increasing numbers being urged for a return to the fold of firm government in which Russians are accustomed after centuries of rule by royal czars and then by many decades of rule by Communist czars. These are the elements that found their voice through V. Zhirnovsky who wants to restore the power and prestige of the old Soviet Union.

But the old-style authoritarian Russian chauvinists are now opposed by the new, liberal and democratic forces released following the collapse of centralised power. The last thing these

people want to see is a return to modernised czarism.

This is why the younger people, the now uncensored Russian media, the parliament and, above all, the Russian army are opposed to the incursion into Chechnya. Recent public opinion polls show that in fact a majority of Russians disapprove of Mr. Yeltsin's plunge into Chechnya. These Russians feel that although the Chechens are scoundrels they are independent minded rebels, and the fear is that if they are suppressed by force it will be the turn next of other independent-minded elements in Russian society.

So strong and widespread is this fear of neo-czarism that it has even "infected" the higher ranks of the Red Army. In the past few weeks generals of regular units of that formidable force flatly and publicly refused to obey orders. That

can only be described as "mutiny."

The generals are not standing up for the Chechens but for the principle that political dissent should not be crushed by force of arms. It is this principle that has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament.

Some generals are behaving in this independent fashion but there are other generals who are perfectly loyal and are obeying Moscow's commands and are ordering the bombing and shelling of Chechen forces and of Chechen civilians.

It is, indeed, bitterly ironic that the struggle for political plurality and democracy in Russia is being fought for and on behalf of people who, for the most part, are believed to be fascists and villains.

Whether it is the strength of the internal Russian criticism of the Chechen adventure or the strength of criticism from Muslim governments abroad or the strength of armed Chechen resistance on the ground that caused it is not known. What is important for now is that Yeltsin has, for the time being, called off the attack on Grozny, the Chechen capital, which has been severely battered.

But this softening may not necessarily be a good thing, especially for the countries of the Third World because the Russians should remain strong and united to provide these countries with a balancing force against the one world power, the United States.

It is for Mr. Yeltsin, or some other ruler of the Russian Federation, to prove that Russia can remain strong and united without becoming an oppressive dictatorship.

Government policies to blame for rising cost of living

by Ella Nasrallah

COMMENTING ON the reports of impending government reshuffle, a writer in Al Ra'i said Jordan requires a team of ministers capable of taking decisions to help their country overcome the difficulties facing it at the present and under the peace era. Qualified and efficient ministers could be made responsible for several ministries and indeed many of the present ministries could be run by higher councils like those which can take care of tourism, higher education and planning without a minister present, said Tareq Masarwah. The writer said that what the country needs now is a practical plan to achieve social justice and deal with the many ills that face the Kingdom.

Huda Fakhouri, a columnist in Al Dustour, supported old pensioners' drive to receive cost of living allowances like their colleagues who start their retirement

this month. The writer said that the government, which imposes taxes on television, on citizens departing from the country and universities can impose a limited amount of tax to be dedicated to the old pensioners whose income does not cover the cost of their sustenance. She said that the retired servicemen and civil servants who had spent the prime of their life serving the country ought to be able to lead a decent life in their old age.

Shafiq Obeidat, a writer for Sawt Al Shaab, tackled the issue of rising prices of various commodities, hampering the concerned authorities, especially the Ministry of Supply, for failing to control the situation. The merchants are not satisfied with a limited margin of profit and they sell even the basic commodities for exorbitant prices while the consumers are left at the mercy without any interference on the part of the government to put matters

right, said the writer. He demanded that the government impose stricter control over prices and urged the consumers to avoid buying commodities whose prices are unusually high in a bid to force the merchants to bring them down and deter their greed.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Fahd Al Fanek, a writer in Al Ra'i, criticised the government's newly introduced law on encouraging investments. He said that certified economic projects are allowed to be exempted from income tax, customs duty and other taxes for many years, thus depriving the treasury of badly needed income. The writer said that under the previous regulations economic projects were given five years during which they were exempted from such taxes but the new law allows them to extend the term to 12 years.

Samir Naifeh, a columnist in Sawt Al Shaab daily, said that stores that sell spare parts are still selling their goods at the same old rates despite the government's decision to reduce the customs duty on them. The merchants claim they had bought the goods

at higher prices and the customers have no alternative but to buy the parts for their broken-down cars. The writer demanded that the Ministry of Supply and customs department interfere and put an end to profiteering and manipulations, especially as cars are indispensable for citizens in their daily life.

Despite the assurances of the minister of finance and the Central Bank governor about the sound financial and monetary situation, Jordanians have started to feel that the value of the Jordanian dinar is on the decline, said Taber Adwan, a columnist in Al Dustour. The writer said that the financial market is in bad situation, reflecting the real poor economic performance of the country while the Jordanian dinar is losing its value gradually as is clearly seen in the continued rise in the price of various commodities and the rate of exchange of foreign currency against the dinar, said the writer.

The writer said that Parliament should examine the economic situation in depth and should revise all the government's policies with a view to reforming the national economy.

Hamadeh Faraanch, a columnist in Al Dustour, said Islam does not differentiate between the monotheistic religions or the prophets in whom Muslims believe. He demanded that the government announced official holidays on Christmas day and on

Features

Established Soviet-era immigrants balk at newcomers

By Doina Chiacu
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Before communism crumbled, immigrants from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe flocked to the United States for freedom and democracy.

Today they come for something else. "Now you have people who just want to get rich. It doesn't matter how," said Ena Ghyka of Arlington, VA, who fled Romania in 1976.

"It's a different breed, completely different," said Irene Nikitin, 71, of San Francisco, a World War II refugee from Kiev.

The latest wave of immigrants from Russia and its former satellites is getting a chilly reception from some of those who came before.

Communist-era refugees were escaping political or religious persecution, which gave their immigrant status a martyr-like glow, they see the newcomers as everything from rude to morally bankrupt, lured to the United States by videocassette recorders and fast cars. And they hold the Iron Curtain responsible.

"The people on top of the social pyramid were stealing — there was no morality. Everybody was stealing, everybody was cheating. Ten years it became a habit, built into their nervous system," said Andrew Kaweck, 58, a staff writer for the Polish Daily News in Chicago.

Mr. Kaweck said he had the same "bad habits" to break when he came from Poland 20 years ago, but it may be harder for those who lived that way longer.

"Some newcomers are cheating everyone from IRS to friends," Mr. Kaweck said, referring to the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. tax agency. "They wouldn't obey the rules. ... They are destroyed from the inside. And it's not their fault. It's the system."

Newcomers don't deny a communist society left a mark on its people.

"We were as blind cats in former Soviet Union because we believed in communism and other things," said Lyba Mikityanskaya, who arrived from Ukraine last year. "Now we come to this country and we see we were wrong."

But they point out that life has gotten harder in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, with anti-Semitism, crime and ethnic clashes on the rise.

"People who are coming now are much more like refugees, escaping a war zone," said Vladimir Vishnevsky, 36, who came from Russia 30 years ago. "People who came before were like prisoners escaping prison."

Yes, they long for a better life, he said. And why shouldn't they?

Friction between the old guard and newcomers is nothing new in this country of immigrants, said Arthur Helton, director of migration

programmes at the Open Society Institute. Those who settled on the lower east side of Manhattan at the turn of the century, for example, were "reviled and demonized" by other Americans, including those who came before, he said.

But a fierce ideological conflict, now as dead as the cold war and the "evil empire," makes this situation unique in recent immigrant history.

"It's a difference between people who are brought up under a totalitarian, communist, payernalist system and those who have absolutely no knowledge of that kind of system," said Pauline Bilus, head of Action for Russian Immigrants. A resettlement programme in Brighton Beach in the New York city borough of Brooklyn.

"We're talking primarily about a 70- to 75-year gap — or what I call a black hole — of people who have lived under this totalitarian system. This great experiment that became a dismal failure."

So dismal that many people didn't want to stay to pick up the pieces.

Immigration to the United States from the region has increased sharply since the Iron Curtain rose. Immigrants admitted from former Soviet republics alone went from 11,100 in 1989 to 58,500 in 1993, according to the Immigration and Naturalisation Service.

In Brighton Beach, a boardwalk community of up to 60,000 Russian immigrants, "Nyet" is more common than "No" on the streets and many stores use the Cyrillic alphabet.

Ms. Bilus says tensions between immigrants are normal. "People will always look down on the new kid on the block."

But Russians in Brighton Beach have become so identified with crime, particularly the organised kind, that established immigrants in the New York area formed a group to protect Russian speakers from discrimination.

In Ms. Ghyka's Romanian circle, the newcomers and established emigres tend to avoid each other.

"We're different, it's a big difference in mentality, and in values," she said. "For this reason, the Romanians try not to be in contact with other Romanians."

Svetlana Zabelin of San Francisco, who has helped fellow Russian speakers settle in the area, has a more detached view of their situation.

"People take two generations to arrive at some kind of — if I can call it a normal — society," said Mr. Zabelin, 71, who was born in Croatia to Russian parents and left in 1947. "It will take time to get rid of the whole pervasive influence of his party. It will take time to clean all that up — for the Romanians, Bulgarians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks — that's why they are going through such pains."

Russians bog down around Grozny

(Continued from page 1) out a responsible and dangerous combat duty," TASS quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying. "Everyone will be thinking about you this New Year," he said from the Kremlin in Moscow.

Russians have sent plane-loads of presents to troops in Chechnya for New Year, traditionally the biggest holiday in Moscow.

Dozens of Russian soldiers are among the many victims of the fighting so far. There are no reliable figures from either side but reporters in Grozny say Chechen casualties there are high, hospitals are full of injured civilians

and short of drugs.

Mr. Yeltsin said the campaign would lead to a safer, more peaceful Russia.

"Those who are impatiently awaiting your return and who will raise their glass to you this New Year's Eve are depending on you for a peaceful and calm 1995," he was quoted as saying in an address released by his press service.

"I am sure the people of Chechnya will see the importance of what you are doing, in the name of preserving the homeland, the united and indivisible Russia," Mr. Yeltsin was quoted as saying.

Russia to go ahead with oil export reform plan

MOSCOW (R) — Russia will go ahead with a plan to reform its oil export system that has drawn sharp criticism from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Davydov has said.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Mr. Davydov as saying export quotas and licences would be scrapped and replaced with a system of compulsory deliveries to domestic consumers.

The plan to introduce compulsory domestic deliveries, aimed at preventing a stampede to more lucrative export markets, has been denounced

by the IMF and World Bank as just another barrier to Russia maximising its export earnings.

The international lending agencies have linked oil export liberalisation to future credits, vital not only for rehabilitating the oil sector but also for budget financing.

TASS also quoted Mr. Davydov as saying the number of "special exporters", or companies authorised to export oil, would be reduced to 12 from the present 14. The World Bank has called for the abolition of special exporters.

Mr. Davydov said the new

By Naana Mwaluko
Reuters

NAIROBI — The appointment of Africa's first woman vice-president has focused attention on why so few African women enter politics and only a much smaller minority reach high office.

Two recent international meetings — the U.N. Population Conference in Cairo in September and the fifth African Regional Conference on Women in Senegal last month — put women's liberation and empowerment at the forefront of their concerns.

But both took place on the world's poorest continent, where half its population as women are stifled by cultural and sexual taboos. No one expects the conferences to provoke rapid change.

"Women politicians in Africa have to fight prejudices in society and an environment not conducive to success," said Maria Nziomo, a Nairobi University senior

lecturer in political science.

The idea that women are less capable has long been in vogue. They face also increasingly more hardship as the lack of funds," she said, noting that traditionally African women are barred from owning property.

Reset by poverty — sub-Saharan Africa has the world's highest number of people under the international poverty line — women are well aware of the host of hurdles to a political life.

Many say they are forced to toe the party line of their male opposite numbers who wheel and deal in the political arena while women take a socially accepted backseat as merely token leaders.

On being named, Uganda's Ande Wandira Kazibwe said "women in Uganda should know that privileges, according to us by government will have to go with responsibilities. I am ready to show my worth."

Ms. Kazibwe retained her

previous position of minister of gender (women's) community development, a rare portfolio in Africa.

Male newspaper commentators in Uganda's capital Kampala praised President Yoweri Museveni's decision to appoint Ms. Kazibwe, saying he had sewn up the women's vote for elections next year.

"At campaigns, women are jeered at and depicted as frustrated divorcees in politics as a last resort. African women don't like to vote or study politics," said politics student Mary Mwangi.

"Men feel you will steal the political spotlight and because we are so few they throw mud and slander us," said Agnes Ndeti, a parliamentarian and the foremost woman in Kenya's opposition.

"But none of us have defected (to the ruling Kanu Party) because we believe in what we are doing," she added.

Lip service to equality is increasingly paid by leaders in Africa because of increased solidarity among women demanding a greater say in the continent, but gains are few and far between.

Tanzania's founding President Julius Nyerere was embarrassed this month as chairman of a two-day conference in Nairobi on Africa's political and economic agenda for the year 2000 when a woman complained to him about the handful of women present.

Conference organisers, asked by Mr. Nyerere to explain, said more women had been invited but many had failed to turn up.

Women's development and progress in politics received a hard blow in April with the killing of Rwanda's Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, who fought for ethnic repression and an end to women's oppression in the tiny central African state.

Ms. Uwilingiyimana, 41,

entered politics in 1992 shortly after then president Juvenal Habyarimana bowed to the wind of change sweeping across Africa and allowed multi-party politics.

A dynamic, shrewd woman who preached tribal tolerance in a nation where ethnic allegiance is seen as all-important, she led a tough fight against women being depicted as the weak sex who should be shunted out of public service.

At a political rally in the capital Kigali, Mr. Habyarimana singled out his prime minister by shouting: "You, woman!"

Ms. Uwilingiyimana stood and replied: "Don't call me that. I am not your wife."

Only the second African woman to serve as a prime minister, Ms. Uwilingiyimana was slaughtered by members of the presidential guard on April 6 despite being under the escort of U.N. guards.

The three-month blood-

bath that followed the assassination of Mr. Habyarimana killed up to one million people across Rwanda.

In neighbouring Burundi, Sylvie Kinigi was appointed prime minister only on the eve of the killing of President Melchior Ndadaye by renegade Tutsi troops in October last year.

Diplomats said she reluctantly accepted the post as she had felt she could achieve more by remaining the civil service head in charge of economic planning in the prime minister's office.

An elegant, soft-spoken but straight-talking 41-year-old, Ms. Kinigi abandoned her political life when her cabinet collapsed last February and now works for Burundi's Commercial Bank.

"I am not outside of politics but I have left the political scene," Mr. Kinigi, a now largely sidelined campaigner for tolerance in a country almost boiling with the opposite, told Reuters.

U.N. General Assembly supports moves to eliminate land mines

In a report to the assembly earlier this year, the United Nations said the only way to stop the devastation created by the estimated 110 million land mines scattered throughout the world is to ban their production.

"Land mines may be one of the most widespread, lethal, and long lasting forms of pollution we have yet encountered, and we are currently losing the battle to protect innocent civilians from their effects," the report said.

"Even with significant increases in demining efforts worldwide and foreseeable advances in technology, it will be impossible to solve the global land mine problem unless their proliferation is halted."

"The best and most effective way to achieve this is to ban their production."

Congress and the United Nations efforts to get a worldwide moratorium on the export of land mines.

Mr. Leahy said the resolution puts all countries on record in support of the eventual elimination of these weapons. "This is a major step forward. It should end the debate about the need for the goal of the eventual elimination of anti-personnel land mines," he said.

In a second resolution, also adopted by consensus, the assembly supported the conference which will convene in September 1995 to review the 1980 Conventional Weapons Treaty in order to strengthen the protocol on land mines.

A special meeting of experts will be held in January to begin planning for the review conference.

The treaty, officially

Of all the debris left after a conflict, land mines are the most widespread and pernicious, the U.N. says. In addition to the estimated 110 million that already exist, it says that between 2 and 5 million more are being laid each year.

According to the U.N., the countries most affected are: Afghanistan with 9 to 10 million mines; Angola with nine to 15 million mines; Iraq with five to 10 million; Kuwait with five million; Cambodia with eight to 10 million; Western Sahara with one to two million; Mozambique with one to two million; and Somalia, Bosnia and Croatia with one million mines each.

The U.N. says that other countries with lands mines include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Iran, Laos, Liberia, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Peru, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, Vietnam and Yemen. Australia and Antarctica are perhaps the only continents free of mine fields.

Feminist poet represents Mandela in Paris

By Sanja Gohre
Reuters

JOHANNESBURG — The first ambassador of the new South Africa to Paris is a poet, the sister of a famous jazz trumpeter and an unabashed fan of Nelson Mandela.

Barbara Masekela, 53, also feels strongly about the fact that she is the only woman among the first 16 ambassadors named by Mandela's government this month.

"South Africa is full of talented women... they are found and they must be found. It does not fit the image as a democratic country not to have women in these positions," she said in an interview.

"It's incumbent on the government to find them."

Ms. Masekela, who takes up her post on Jan. 1, points out that she and other prominent figures in Mandela's ruling African National Congress (ANC) came from poor families.

"That reminds us of who we are... my brother and I always wanted to remember that so that we couldn't lose

ourselves. We always knew we would come back. And when we came home we would work towards the improvement of our society."

Both Barbara Masekela and her musician brother Hugh went into exile in their youth because of apartheid.

"There was a hardening of the apartheid regime... It was very clear that opportunities were beginning to narrow and anybody opposed to apartheid was in danger. One had to be very careful where one went, where one lived, where one worked."

She met Nelson Mandela when he was in jail for the ANC and was asked to help prepare for a visit he made to the United States after his release from jail in February, 1990.

Mr. Mandela, clearly impressed, asked her to become his personal assistant.

"You can't imagine what it was like for me with our president," she said. "It almost seemed as though there was no problem that was too large for him to tackle and that he has always been able to emerge out of any situation with great dignity."



Nelson Mandela

Apart from raising funds and building cultural relations with France, she hopes to build South Africa's relationship with French-speaking African countries.

"I think it is utterly disgraceful that we are on the continent and know so little and do so little with the other Africans who speak French on the continent," she said. "It is my task to bring investment to South Africa. I

can tell them about the plight of my people."

"I hope that I can let people in France understand and appreciate the diversity of the culture of South Africa and that we actually have a new democratic culture emerging."

"If I can demonstrate the humanity of my president, the caring of my leadership, then I will become a good diplomat."

Ms. Masekela lived the first 10 years of her life with her grandmother, who had married a white man, in the eastern Transvaal mining town of Witbank. She then moved to her parents in Alexandra township outside Johannesburg.

"My granny was a great influence on me. She was the original independent woman."

During her 27 years in exile Ms. Masekela lived in Ghana, Britain, Zambia and the United States. Asked about her feelings on returning home, she said:

"We dreamed about how it would be. But reality is quite different... We didn't know that we

would come here for four years and that there would be overwhelming violence and that when we would be in the country we would be in danger. One thought of liberation as kind of walking in and having change immediately."

Ms. Masekela said one of the reasons she was looking forward to going to Paris was because the media there were not obsessed with "piffle and sleaze."

"I think it's an utter disgrace the way people's private lives are paraded in front of the press..."

"Really what's important about me, about you, is what do we bring to the lives of other people in this society, how do we contribute to uplifting our people."

"I'm glad I'm going to France actually, because in France you don't have that kind of focus."

She said her poetry was inspired by her private feelings but she had yet to publish any.

"One day I will when I have the time. I have been saying that for many years. I haven't had time to focus on myself."

What alternative to abolishing homework?

By Joe Pisani

IS NOTHING sacred in America? Homework was once a hallowed tradition ranking right up there with detention, fraternity, hazing and income tax. It was a milestone in the development of Western civilisation, one of the few remaining ways to inflict pain on youngsters.

Moreover, homework teaches kids skills they'll need to succeed in the real

workaday world, such as evading responsibility, cutting corners and plagiarism.

Yet in California an outspoken school board member has come up with a plan to abolish homework, which begs the question: is he getting paid off in baby-sitting dollars? Banning homework has taken on the intensity of other historic social issues such as taxation without representation, a tyranny, and

housework should be shared.

The furor began when Garrett Redmond, a trustee with the Cabrillo Unified School District, introduced a proposal in Half Moon Bay, California, to abolish homework because it puts an unbearable strain on family life; it is unjust, and it wastes too much time. Also, it destroys home life and favours students whose parents are smart enough to do it for

their kids. And there's a fundamental inequity between poor students and well-to-do students, who can tap into the Internet and CD-ROMs.

Finally, it's a financial burden on the taxpayer, because textbooks get worn out by being carried back and forth to school.

Did I forget anything? Mr. Redmond, who belongs to a five-member school board that oversees the education system for 3,500 students in a district stretching 22 kilometres along the coast south of San Francisco, wasn't joking. His proposal has provoked discussion among students, parents and teachers — not to mention academics, who are never at a loss for an opinion on any topic.

In reality, homework is rarely taken seriously by teachers, parents or students. Every kid I know, including four in my own family, is clamouring to be represented on the local school board so they can draft initiatives to end homework once and for all.

I was therefore astounded by the Half Moon Bay horror stories of students slaving to complete up to six hours

homework a night.

What country is this? Japan? The former Soviet Union? According to the president of the school board, the district's 3,500 students spend some 10,000 hours every night doing homework.

"That's a lot of hours," he concluded sagely.

Mr. Redmond said his daughter, who was valedictorian of her eighth-grade class last year, usually spends five hours a night on homework, and those are hours he'd rather she spent with him, even if it means watching TV together.

After all, watching Melrose Place or Married... With Children will give kids an education they'll never get in the classroom.

Do young people, who already watch dozens of hours of TV a week, need more time to watch even more TV? Did Mr. Redmond ever consider giving up some of his TV time to help his daughter with her homework? Helping our children with spelling and arithmetic is about the only interaction some of us have, however volatile.

Don't you love providing

adult supervision on social studies and science projects? I can still remember the time my dad helped me build a wind tunnel for the eighth-grade science fair. In a few years father-son cooperative effort, we almost burned the house down.

When it comes to homework, there are two extremes: parents who don't care what their kids do, and parents who do the assignments themselves. Parental assistance can be seen when a second-grader's composition on her summer vacation comes back written in compound-complex sentences, or when a ninth-grader's algebra assignment comes back entirely wrong.

On the other hand, maybe the California Proposition deserves serious study.

Banning homework might help overworked and underpaid parents, who are tired of doing their kids' assignments after a day of dealing with a snarling boss or unruly spouse. It might even give them some additional free time, time that could be profitably spent... watching NYPD Blue.

The Greenwich Time

Economy

JORDAN TIMES, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1994

Dollar set for rollercoaster ride in 1995

LONDON (R) — Investors may be able to breathe a sigh of relief now the dollar is finally clawing its way higher, but the upturn is only likely to last until the summer, financial analysts said Friday.

They had yet to dot the "i"s and cross the "t"s" on forecasts for next year but in the main saw a Deutsche-mark upturn in the second half of 1995 putting paid to the dollar rally.

"Further Federal Reserve tightening in the first half of next year means the dollar will remain strong but in the second half other countries, Germany in particular, will start to tighten," said James Montier, economist at Kleinwort Benson.

The U.S. currency rode out 1994 on a subdued note, suffering an unexpected blow from political and economic

problems in southern neighbour Mexico.

The threat of dollars flooding the market if Mexico moved to support a recently devalued peso led to a sudden end-of-the-year dollar slide. The United States has extended a \$6 billion line of credit to Mexico and there were market fears this had already begun to be drawn down, although the U.S. Treasury denied this.

In any event, the dollar fall has been in the thinnest of markets, and analysts said that come the new year the mood would brighten again for the U.S. unit.

"I don't think it's indicative of how it's going to be for the rest of the year," said Dudley Rouse, a director at American Express Bank in London. "The dollar is still bid."

The Federal Reserve (Fed) is expected to tighten monetary policy by 0.50 or 0.75 percentage point at the next two-day meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee at the end of the January.

While this would widen the yield differential between the U.S. and Germany further, there will come a time when the Bundesbank decides to do an about-face on monetary policy following its gradual easing since the second half of 1992.

"A move by the Bundesbank to tighten policy, at a time when the Fed may be moving in the opposite direction, should bolster confidence in the mark," said Mark Cliffe, chief international economist at Midland Global Markets Research.

Also the mark will be one

of the few currencies with buying power next year as political and economic problems continue elsewhere, and as firm tone versus other European currencies will help it rise against the dollar.

"Looking at the other European currencies the mark is really the only sensible choice," Kleinwort Montier said. He noted that political worries in France, Britain, Italy and Spain will take their toll and in Scandinavia debt problems will continue to drag on the Swedish and Norwegian crowns.

Analysts also noted that the market was currently ignoring the huge internal and external deficits in the United States but these could easily become a focus later in 1995.

The dollar's year-end comeback against the yen will

also extend into 1995 but gains are likely to be limited, analysts said. The U.S.-Japan trade dispute will linger as a major concern in the foreign exchange market but will now cause as much of a stir as it did this year, they added.

The dollar could rise to around 165 yen and possibly to 185 as the first quarter of next year," said Masamichi Yanada, chief dealer at Bank of Tokyo. He said that although there were signs Japan's huge trade surplus was shrinking, it was too early to judge whether it would turn into a long-term trend.

The dollar was ending 1994 around 155.00 marks and 94.50 yen, down around 11 per cent, but it had been lower. In October it touched its trough at around 148.50 marks and 90.00 yen, around 14 per cent down on the year.

Big powers complete new trade body launch

GENEVA (R) — The United States, the European Union and Canada joined Friday in a symbolic ceremony clearing the way for the launch of Jan. 1 of the new World Trade Organisation (WTO).

To champagne toast, envoys of the three big trading powers, including officials of the 12 current EU countries, handed over documents confirming their ratification of the international treaty that sets up the WTO.

The formal act meant that all four members of the "quasi" group that dominates the world trading scene were on board for the WTO launch. Japan delivered its ratification instruments on Tuesday, earlier than the

others for "technical reasons."

"This is a historic occasion for the United States and for the other countries that have accepted the agreement," U.S. acting chief of mission to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Andrew Stoler, told Reuters.

"It is a great achievement that together with the United States and Canada we could ratify and then deposit the ratification instruments together ahead of Jan. 1," said Jean-Pierre Leng, the European Union's ambassador.

In a message from Spain where he is on holiday, GATT chief Peter Sutherland who becomes interim head of the WTO, said the fact that at least 85 countries had now ratified or accepted the accord was "a marvellous start" for the new body.

These accounts for the vast bulk of world trade. "It is a very good omen for the future," he declared. GATT currently has 125 members, and eventually some 145 are expected to come into the new organisation.

The WTO is the centrepiece of the world trade treaty negotiated over seven years in GATT's Uruguay Round. It cuts tariffs by an average of more than one third and opens markets for services, farm produce and textiles.

Over the coming year, it will absorb GATT, which has lasted 46 years as a "temporary body" because of the big traders' failure in the late 1940s to agree on a more powerful body.

Both Mr. Stoler and Mr. Leng said they believed trade conflicts between Washing-

ton and Brussels would be less likely in the WTO, although difficulties in GATT have brought them on occasion to the brink of trade wars — would remain.

"Many of the trade issues that characterised the 1980s resulted from the perfect rules that were viewed differently by the sides," said Mr. Stoler.

With the new treaty, he added, and specially in the area of farming subsidies which were at the centre of many disputes, "I think we have a better set of rules and a shared understanding of what the rules are."

Both expressed disappointment that there had been no agreement before the new year on a permanent head for the new body. "It is certainly a failure on the part of governments that they could not reach a consensus for Jan. 1," said Mr. Leng.

But the two envoys indicated they stood firmly behind their rival candidates for the post — Italy's ex-Trade Minister Renato Ruggiero for the EU and former Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari for the United States and Latin America.

In GATT member head count, Mr. Ruggiero is well ahead, followed by South Korea's former Trade Minister Kim Chul-Su — who has the backing of Asian and Pacific region states.

"It is true that we have three good candidates," said Mr. Stoler, "but I think that President Salinas who stepped down as Mexico's head of state on Dec. 1 has demonstrated in a real-life environment his commitment to liberal trading regime."

Israel boosts defence spending in 1995

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — The Israeli parliament Friday approved a \$49 billion budget for 1995 which included a 7.9 per cent increase in defence spending, officials said.

Defence spending was increased to \$8.3 billion or 17.8 per cent of the total budget, and includes \$1.8 billion in U.S. military aid.

The budget was adopted by 58 votes for compared with 41 against.

Five deputies from the Communist Party and the Arab Democratic Party voted against, to protest the small amount of public aid for the 800,000 Arab minority and 70,000 Druze.

Funding for the internal security service Shin Bet and the Mossad intelligence service is not included in defence spending and is to remain unchanged, at about \$350 million.

The Treasury has forecast a budget deficit of \$3.3 billion

next year, or 2.75 per cent of the Gross National Product (GNP), compared with three per cent in 1994.

Spending on integrating new immigrants will remain fixed at \$3.8 billion, even though 70,000 people are expected to arrive in Israel mainly from the new republics of the former Soviet Union, according to the Treasury.

Investment in infrastructure, especially roads, will go up to a record \$3.5 billion.

The Israeli economy roared ahead in 1994 as the Gross Domestic Product (GNP) jumped 6.8 per cent to push the annual per capita income to \$13,730, the General Bureau of Statistics has announced.

In its year-end estimates for 1994, the bureau favourably compared Israel's economic performance as measured by GDP growth and lower unemployment to that

of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

The comparison also highlighted the country's inflation and trade deficit problems.

The nation's economy expanded faster than all 24 OECD countries. Israel also leads OECD countries with a 4.3 per cent rise in GDP per capita.

Unemployment, which fell from 10 per cent last year to 7.6 per cent this year, ranked Israel ninth among OECD countries with the lowest jobless rates.

By contrast, Israel had the highest trade deficit and second highest inflation rate in the group. The deficit jumped from 2.4 per cent of GDP to 4.1 per cent. Similarly, consumer inflation, which totalled 12.3 per cent this year, was second only to Turkey's 106 per cent annual inflation rate.

Israel's per capita income last year of \$12,375 was lower than Japan's \$33,900, the U.S.'s \$24,300, France's

\$21,700, and England's \$15,900, but was higher than Spain's \$12,200.

Most of the economy's expansion occurred in the second half of last year. During the first half of the year the GDP grew 5 per cent, expanding at a more moderate 4 per cent in the second half of the year.

The business product, which measures the GDP, excluding public and housing services, jumped 7.9 per cent from 3.5 per cent. The expansion reflects 8 per cent industrial production growth and a 7.2 per cent increase in the building sector. Trade and services surged 9 per cent, while agriculture shrank 4 per cent.

Although business leaders have been complaining about eroding profitability, private sector labour productivity actually increased this year by 0.2 per cent, after dropping in the previous two years. Only when the public sector is included, productivity remained unchanged.

Syria exporting 360,000 b/d of crude oil

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria is exporting around 360,000 barrels per day (b/d) of crude oil, an estimated daily production of 400,000 b/d, Oil Minister Nader Nabulsi has said.

The minister said oil revenue was providing the country with between 68 and 70 per cent of its foreign currency earnings, which totalled around 17 per cent of Syria's gross domestic product, which amounted to \$20 billion last year.

Addressing parliament, the minister said Syria had to far pumped over 318 million tonnes of crude oil from its oilfields all over the country.

A copy of his address, delivered this week, was obtained by Reuters Friday.

Mr. Nabulsi said surveys showed there were 623 sites which might have crude oil in Syria. About 285 of them were drilled and oil was found at 122.

The minister, who began his career as an oil engineer at the Syrian Petroleum Company in the late 1960s, had that studied in the United States, said that more than 2,650 wells were drilled.

He said Syria first found oil in 1957 at the Karachouk field, in the far northeast of the country close to the Turkish border. Syria exported the first oil in 1968. Production during that year was about one million tonnes

(20,000 b/d).

Syria's oil output, which was all heavy crude at that time, reached a peak of 11 million tonnes (220,000 b/d) in 1976, but production began to decline starting from that year, the minister said.

He said production of the heavy crude went down to around eight million tonnes (160,000 b/d) in 1978 and continued at the same rate since then.

Light crude was first produced in 1985 from oilfields which were discovered at the Dayr Az Zawr area, close to the Iraqi border. The oil is one of the best in the world, the minister said.

About 400,000 b/d are now being produced from 22 oilfields in the area by the Al Faraj Company, 50 per cent owned by Syria's petroleum company, 18.75 per cent by Germany's Deminor, 15.625 per cent by Posten (U.S. Shell) and 15.625 by Syria Shell (Royal Dutch Shell).

He said that out of 22 international companies, who explored for oil in Syria during the 1980s, four found oil and the others left the country. Those who left spent \$680 million.

Mr. Nabulsi said Syria was also producing around 6.36 million cubic metres (226.6 million cubic feet) per day of gas from three gas treatment plants.

Zaire's premier vows to purge public sector heads

KINSHASA (R) — Zairean Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo has promised to purge state companies and end decades of mismanagement and corruption.

Speaking to executives of all 56 state-owned corporations summoned to a meeting in the capital the centrist premier said their firms' contributions to state finances had become more and more insignificant since independence from Belgium in 1960.

"Many executives have behaved like veritable predators, making no distinction between their wallets and their rest assured, we will put a stop to all these practices, which verge on the anarchic," he said.

Mr. Kengo said only four of the 56 had been able to meet a government request

for detailed reports and none of those four were of any use either technically or financially.

"Many today are in a bankrupt state and should simply go into voluntary liquidation," he said.

Mr. Kengo said his government planned to improve performance with a series of "draconian measures," including a reduction in tax exemptions, an end to fixed prices and abolition of monopoly status for all but strategic and essential firms.

The government would soon draw up a list of which companies were still viable, which should stay in the state sector, which should be liquidated or turned into public services, and which were possible candidates for privatisation, he added.

Mr. Kengo said that given

Zaire's enormous size, plans were under way to decentralise many of the companies, turning their provincial branches into autonomous units.

"Punishment will be severe... from now on you will be judged by your own people," he warned executives.

Mr. Kengo has been ridiculed by opponents for basing his \$311 million 1995 budget proposal on dramatic increases in revenue from state-owned copper mining giant Gécamines and diamond producer MIBA.

Once Zaire's biggest foreign currency earner, Gécamines is on the verge of bankruptcy and has made no contribution to state coffers for years. MIBA benefits from generous tax exemptions.

Mr. Kengo insisted that 1995 would be a hard year

and cooperation would have to make their contributions to the state budget.

He also addressed fears that a division of senior posts in the public sector, agreed as part of a coalition agreement with supporters of President Mobutu Sese Seko, would perpetuate the kind of political favouritism he has sworn to eliminate.

Previously the key public sector jobs went to Mr. Mobutu supporters but the agreement says they are now to be shared equally with his political opponents.

Mr. Kengo said new appointments would be made on the basis of professional competence alone and candidates would have to choose between careers as politicians or managers — they could not do both.

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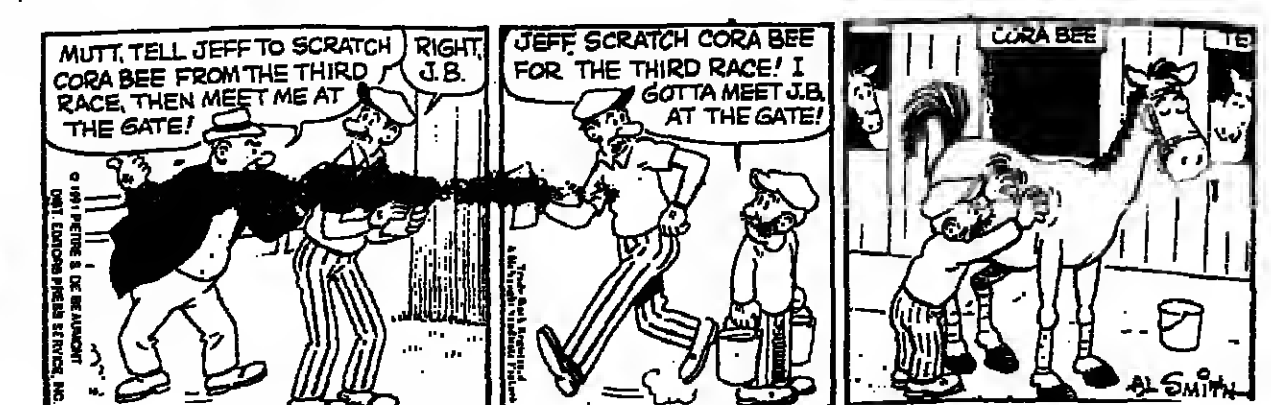
Peanuts



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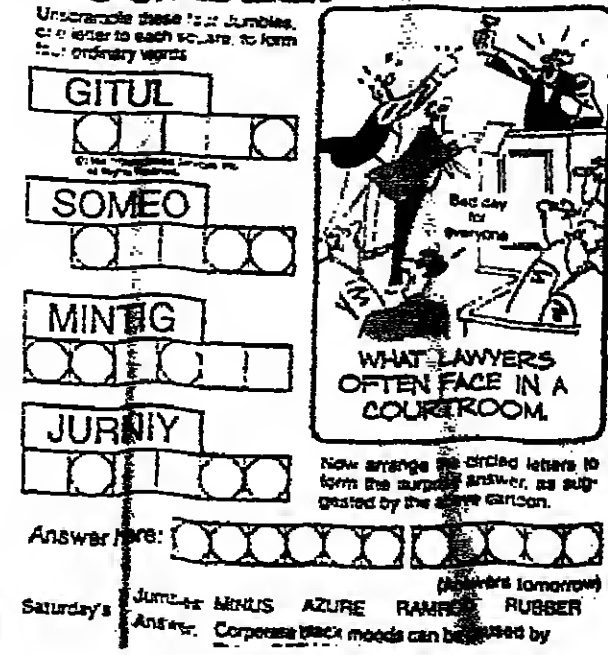
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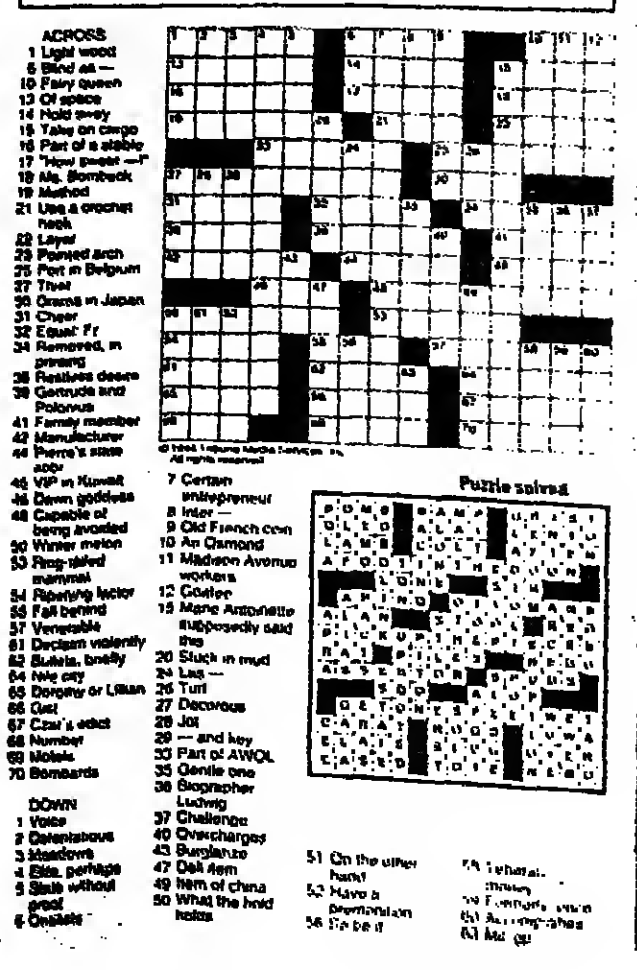
THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword



Merrill Lynch maintains DM/USD1.55 and JPY/USD 92 forecasts

The following report, covering the period from Thursday, Dec. 22, 1994 until Wednesday, Dec. 28, 1994, was provided by Naser Nabulsi, private client group at Merrill Lynch — Dubai

Currency outlook

Overview

Fundamental View: In a Christmas-holidays shortened trading week, the dollar held on to the gains since the Nov. 8 Republican victory in mid-term U.S. elections, to trade around DM/USD 1.57 and JPY/USD 100 levels. As expected, the Fed declined to raise rates again at its Dec. 20 FOMC meeting and the focus now is on the next FOMC meeting on Jan. 31-Feb. 1. A 50 basis point hike in the Fed funds rate is expected at this meeting. A similar hike is expected at the March 31 meeting.

If that turns out to be the peaking of U.S. rates as our December forecast assumes, the dollar rally may not have much further to go. If U.S. growth remains strong enough to encourage the Fed to raise the funds rate to 7 per cent or higher, a stronger dollar may result. For now, we maintain our 12-month forecasts of DM/USD 1.55 and JPY/USD 92, which assumes that Germany and Japan will hike official interest rates in the second half of 1995.

Technical View: The U.S. dollar was generally strong against most of the world's major currencies during the week ended Dec. 23. As a result, the dollar index posted its eighth gain in nine weeks. Nonetheless, the index has only managed to challenge — but not penetrate — resistance in the 89.00-91.00 area. Moreover, both sentiment and momentum can be described as being overbought, at least on a short term basis.

Thus, while medium term momentum is still constructive (indicating still higher rally highs in coming weeks) short term weakness, in the context of the still developing uptrend, appears indicated. A break below 89.00 would be a good sign that a correction is under way. Although benchmark support remains at 84.91, most of the nearby support exists in the 86.80-87.95 range.

Japanese yen

Fundamental View: The dollar continued to trade steady around the JPY/USD 100 level. The dollar has benefited in recent weeks from a combination of dollar purchases, mainly by the Bank of Japan. We continue to expect the dollar to trade as low as JPY/USD 92 over the next twelve months.

Technical View: The Japanese yen gained 0.1 per cent versus the U.S. dollar during the week ended Dec. 23. Sentiment is overbought. While the currency has only marginally penetrated the trading range that has been in force since July, it has decisively moved below the post-February uptrend channel. Momentum is still weak, and appears to have the potential to have a downward bias into February.

If so, this would allow for an upcoming penetration of 100.80-101.80 Y/U.S.\$ support; such a move would set the stage for further weakness to 105-107. With the above in mind, resistance at 96-97 takes on added significance.

Deutschemark

Fundamental View: The dollar held steady against the Deutschemark trading around DM/USD 1.57. The Deutschemark has been strong on the European crosses, with the French franc and the Italian lira losing ground, due to political uncertainties in the two countries. It looks increasingly clear that the dollar has bottomed against the mark, now that the market has gained confidence in the Fed's "stimulation fighting credentials." For most of this year, market have regarded the Fed as being "behind the curve" on inflation and consequently investors preferred to hold marks rather than dollars. Market participants now seem more inclined to believe that the Fed is serious in its turn toward a more restrictive monetary policy.

Due to this sea-change in sentiment, we recently revised our outlook for the dollar-mark exchange rate from being negative on the dollar versus the mark to having a neutral stance. An important wild card for the dollar is whether or not the massive amounts of capital outflows that.

Pound sterling

Fundamental View: In a short and quiet trading week, the pound held steady around USD/GBP 1.54 and DM/GBP 2.42. Following the 50 basis point hike in the base lending rate by the Bank of England in the first week of December, the British pound staged a modest rally, rising to USD/GBP 1.57 and DM/GBP 2.46.

U.K. fundamentals continue to look good: Underlying inflation — retail price inflation less mortgage interest payments — is currently only 2 per cent. The lowest level in 27 years. However, real GDP rose 4.2 per cent in the third quarter following a 4.1 per cent increase for the second quarter and growth for 1994 should average 3.7 per cent. With very little spare capacity left in the U.K., inflation is likely to begin picking up soon and we expect base rates over the next year to be increased by another 100 basis points. However, we also expect that the U.S. will continue to tighten monetary policy while Germany is expected to shift to a less accommodative stance by the middle of next year. German official rates — the Lombard and discount rates — are expected to remain unchanged during the first half of 1995 before possibly edging higher in the second half. As we expect the short-term interest rate differential between Germany and the U.K. to widen, we look for the pound to appreciate against the mark to DM/GBP 2.50 in 12-month's time and we expect the pound to follow the mark higher against the dollar to our 12-month forecast of USD/GBP 1.61.

Technical View: The British pound lost 0.9 per cent versus the U.S. dollar during the week ended Dec. 23; and was the weakest of the six major currencies we regularly discuss. Sentiment continues to improve and is near oversold levels. Momentum is weak and has the potential to remain so until February. Important nearby support exists down to 1.526 U.S./£, and a break below that level would allow for a test of the January low at \$1.465. Resistance exists near \$1.58, then \$1.643.

Against the DM, sterling fell 0.5 per cent last week. Momentum appears to have expected to show a steady decline, and the federal deficit is decrease. Diverging inflation rates in the coming year and concerns over

monetary policy are likely to lead the S.F./DM to 0.86 in 12-month's time.

In line with our revised Deutschemark-dollar forecast that looks for further near-term dollar strength, we now expect the franc to weaken against the dollar in the next few months before recovering to trade near S.F./U.S.\$ 1.33.

Swiss franc

Technical View: The Swiss franc declined 0.2 per cent versus the greenback during the week ended Dec. 23. Sentiment is at its most oversold readings in over a year. Medium term momentum is weak, but the currency remains above its 1994 uptrend line: The DM cross fell 0.2 per cent last week. Medium term momentum has maintained its upward bias, and is approaching overbought levels. The rally in the cross, therefore, may be approaching its final stages. Although benchmark support exists at .827, a decline decisively through .844 would damage the uptrend. Resistance exists above .850.

Canadian dollar

Fundamental View: The Canadian dollar continued its slide against the U.S. dollar, dropping to C\$/U.S.\$ 1.40 level. Canada's economic fundamentals are sound, yet, they have failed to provide any respite to the C\$. Led primarily by exports, third-quarter real GDP growth registered an impressive 4.7 per cent rate following a robust 6.4 per cent rate for the second quarter. Canadian exports grew at a 20 per cent annualised rate in the third quarter. The strong export performance enabled the third quarter current account deficit to decrease to C\$5.1 billion from C\$7.5 billion in the earlier quarter.

As a share of GDP, this is the lowest level in over seven years. Personal consumption grew at a respectable 2.9 per cent. Unemployment was down in November from 10 per cent to 9.6 per cent. In September and October, the Bank of Canada followed an easy monetary policy with low short-term interest rates, given that the recovery in the consumer goods sector was more fragile than the recovery in the external sector.

The Bank of Canada limited upward pressure on short-term rates through maintaining a low overnight rate, below the U.S. Fed funds rate. With the U.S. now moving towards a restrictive monetary policy, interest rate differentials are moving in favour of the U.S., putting downward pressure again.

We expect that in 1995, rates will be increased by 50 basis points, bringing the cash rate to 10 per cent. The Bank also expects the curve to invert by the second half of next year.

In the near-term, positive news for the AS is likely to come through indications that economic growth in the December quarter is likely to be strong. Also, the government's fiscal package — released second or third week in January — is expected to project surpluses in 1996 and 1997. However, current account data for November is slated to be released on Jan. 4 and that is likely to be negative for the AS. We expect the AS to be trading near U.S.\$/AS 0.80 in six-month's time before falling back to U.S.\$/AS 0.78 in 12-month's time.

MEES: Israeli capital to be used in Egyptian project

NICOSIA (AFP) — Israel's Merhav Group has joined in a nearly \$1.5 billion project to build a refinery near Alexandria, Egypt, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported in its latest edition.

The refinery is part of a multi-billion dollar programme designed to mobilise both public and private capital over the next five years to expand Egypt's oil refining and petrochemical facilities, according to the Cyprus-based review.

Merhav along with Swiss and Egyptian private firms represent 80 per cent of the Irish-registered Middle East Oil Refineries (MIDOR) venture to build a 100,000 barrel-per-day (b/d) refinery at Sidi Kurr, MEES said.

The remaining 20 per cent of the \$1.5 billion capitalised MIDOR belong to the state-owned Egyptian General Petroleum Company (EGPC), which will supply Egyptian crude to the refinery.

Merhav's head, Yossi Meiman, has said his group has already raised \$700 million for the project, out of which \$200 million will come from the United States, MEES reported.

Oil Minister Hamdi Al Banhi told MEES that Cairo has decided the five-year plan after "noticing that Europe and the East Mediterranean countries have not been building refining and petrochemical capacity for some time."

"We expect that there will be an opportunity to increase exports to the neighbouring regions in the coming years... we will also be needing more petroleum products in Egypt after year 2000," he added.

Batayneh heads investment arm of huge Palestinian holding firm

By a Jordan Times staff reporter

AMMAN — The Palestine Investment and Development Company (PIDC), a huge holding company set up by Palestinian businessmen in the wake of the breakthrough in the Middle East peace process, enters 1995 with a new manager for its investment arm after setting up affiliate firms in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Safwan Batayneh, economic advisor at the Prime Ministry, assumed his new job on Dec. 18 after taking a one-year leave of absence from the prime ministry.

Dr. Batayneh, who served as vice-president of a major American investment firm and has extensive experience in the Wall Street, said the \$200 million capital company has already set up several projects in tourism, industry and housing in the West Bank and Gaza and was studying other projects.

"We are considering several projects and are also on the lookout for viable investments in all sectors of the Palestinian economy," Dr. Batayneh told the Jordan Times.

The firm, which is in fact a holding company, has already set up three affiliates in the West Bank to handle projects in tourism, industry and housing. Details of the projects already under implementation were not immediately available, but they are believed to involve tens of millions of dollars.

While commercial viability is indeed a prime consideration in determining investment, the company will also seek to support "initiatives launched by the Palestine

National Authority," Dr. Batayneh said. "After all, one of the company's prime objectives is to develop the Palestinian economy and hence we will be also involved in infrastructure projects" in the West Bank and Gaza, he said.

The Palestine Investment and Development Company, a firm registered in Liberia, is the biggest Palestinian private sector venture and involves dozens of Palestinian businessmen based in Jordan, the Gulf states, Europe and the United States.

The establishment of the company was formally announced in mid-1994, shortly after Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir signed an agreement in May to implement to Sept. 13, 1993, declaration of principles on Palestinian autonomy.

While not all its founders need necessarily see eye-to-eye with the political programmes of Mr. Arafat, president of the PNA which runs autonomy in Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho, the philosophy that prompted them to come together and launch the huge venture was a realisation that the private sector had to take up the initiative to develop the Palestinian economy, according to some of the shareholders of the firm.

"We do not believe in leaving everything to the political regime, hoping that it would do the job for us," said one shareholder earlier this year. "The private sector has to take up its own initiative and see it through while of course cooperating with the political forces."

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LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at mid-session on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Friday.

U.S. \$1.00 costs	1.4036/46	Canadian dollar
	1.5490/00	Deutschemarks
	1.7344/54	Dutch guilders
	1.3106/16	Swiss francs
	31.82/86	Belgian francs
	5.3410/60	French francs
	1623.0/4.0	Italian lire
	99.62/72	Japanese yen
	7.4325/25	Swedish crowns
	6.7620/70	Norwegian crowns
	6.0780/30	Danish crowns
One sterling	\$1.5632/42	
One ounce of gold	\$382.60/383.10	

few issues of shares and stocks added up to D 438.1m

With a total of JD 40 million in new issues of shares and stocks during the first half of 1994, the overall amount at the primary market of the Amman Financial Market since the beginning of the year has reached 438.1 million. Observers say that most investments in new issues were by local investors contrary to the belief of many optimists that foreign investments would be attracted to the Kingdom.

The mid-year results of Arab Jordan Investment Bank show that deposits of clients climbed to JD 178.1 million, a rise of JD 13.5 million over the mid-year results in 1993. Credits extended by the bank increased to JD 71.7 million to JD 89.2 million. Overall assets totalled JD 227.1 million compared to JD 217.1 million at mid-year in 1993 (Al Aswaq).

Total assets at the end of the 1994 (mid-year results) of Cairo Amman Bank reached JD 385.7 million. Credits extended by the bank sharply by JD 38.27 million at the end of June. The bank resorted to other banks and financial institutions to finance a decrease in deposits by clients from JD 15.8 million to JD 299.5 million at mid-year. However, total deposits amounted to JD 329.4 million (Al Aswaq).

Branches in Jordan have opened 30 new branches this year in addition to 112 old ones. With 20 branches in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, banks have a total of 43 branches compared to 30 branches at the end of last year. Twenty more branches are expected to open in the Palestinian territories next year bringing the total to 40 branches for an investment of \$28 million (Al Aswaq).

The Department of Customs will be holding monthly meetings throughout next year to try to work out any difficulties or difficulties between the department and the economic sectors. The meetings will take the form of a dialogue between customs and the private sector and will be held at one of the hotels on Jan. 7 (Dustour).

Loans extended by the Amman Development Bank during the first nine months of this year have reached JD 26.1 million and over 112 borrowers are owed JD 22.8 million. 10 borrowers during the period of last year (Al Aswaq).

The Jordan Petroleum Company has increased its gas production to 250 tonnes a day in addition to importing 250 tonnes a day. According to the secretariat of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, there is no intention to raise the price of a gas (Al Aswaq).

Industry and Trade Minister Khalaf said that finalising economic agreements between Jordan and Israel by mid-May, negotiations between the two countries started last year and covered industry, trade and money change (Al Aswaq).

Solo yachswoman battles rough seas in crippled vessel

Fears still held as Australian frigate steams to rescue

SYDNEY (R) — Rescue authorities said on Friday they may lose track of French yachswoman Isabelle Autissier, adrift in huge sub-Antarctic seas, because her two emergency radio beacons will run out of power before she is due to be rescued Sunday.

Radio stations have been asked to broadcast a message to Autissier to turn off one of the beacons before they both run out of power, said Keith Hopper from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

"We really fear we may lose her if both beacons run out of power," Hopper told Reuters. Each beacon has 48 hours of power.

Radio France, Australia-

lian state-owned broadcasters and some commercial stations in southern Australia have agreed to air the message in French and English.

Autissier, 38, had been heading for Sydney in the second leg of the BOC round the world solo challenge when she activated the emergency beacons at 5:45 p.m. (0300 GMT) on Wednesday.

Autissier's normal radio communications have been severely damaged. A survival kit, including a raft and radio, was dropped to her from an Australian Air Force Hercules plane on Thursday, but Autissier has not made radio contact.

"We just don't know why

she hasn't used the radio," Hopper said, adding Autissier may have decided to try to get some sleep after battling the wild seas for the past 24 hours.

"We hope she will at least tune the radio into a commercial station and hear our message," he added.

The Hercules found Autissier's dismasted yacht, the *Europe II*, pitched wildly in 50-knot winds and gigantic seas about 900 nautical miles south of Tasmania. Briefed radio message to the Hercules, Autissier said there was "something else wrong" besides the broken mast, said one of her shore crew who

was aboard the plane.

Serge Vivand said whether she was with her boat must be confirmed or else she would have created a jury rig with the portion of the main mast that on deck.

"She would not have used the distress call she had lost contact down there," Vivand told Reuters on Friday. "I think it must be her steering. She may have lost her rudder."

Autissier was forced to erect a jury rig when she was dismasted early in the Cape Town-to-Sydney leg of the race. That time she managed to make her way to the French Kerguelen Islands in the southern Indian Ocean and installed a makeshift mast.

Vivand dismissed earlier media reports that Autissier's boat had filled with water and risked sinking, saying the hull looked sound and the yacht normally would not take on water.

"What has probably happened is that a big wave was rolled her and broken the mast and destroyed all her electronics," he said.

Vivand said Autissier was working on deck and saved to him when she saw him. She looked well, but mental fatigue would be a danger now.

"She must be really tired. She is really tough and really intelligent, but mental fatigue will start," he said.

The only death in the

BOC race occurred in 1986-87 when French yachtsman Jacques Derroux fell overboard in calm seas off the east Australian coast after battling huge southern ocean swells. Mental fatigue was blamed.

Conditions have eased slightly, but a new cold front is due to hit her Saturday. "Any front down there in the roaring forties is pretty rough," said Hopper.

Autissier first sailed around the world solo in the last BOC challenge in 1990-91 and earlier this year set the record for the flying cloud yacht race from New York to San Francisco around Cape Horn.

Athens prepares Europe's largest basketball stadium

ATHENS (R) — A 20,000-seat Athens stadium, scheduled to host next June's European nations basketball championship for men, is far from ready and officials expressed concern Friday whether it would be completed on time.

"The stadium's seats, the electronic scoreboards, the wooden floor, and the warm-up courts are still to be completed," an official involved in the works told Reuters.

"There's a lot of work to be done, there have been delays and we must start immediately so that everything is ready on time," he said.

The court, next to the Athens Olympic Stadium, is nicknamed the Temple of Basketball and will be Europe's largest when finished.

It was originally scheduled to open last October

and Athens club panathinaikos would have used it as its home court.

"We are losing big money waiting for the stadium to be completed," said Panathinaikos president Pavlos Yannakopoulos, who has spent \$22 million in the past three years to buy some of the most expensive players in Europe.

"Now we cram our fans into a 3,000-seat stadium in both Greek and European matches and this is a pity since we could have sold an average 9,000 tickets a game if we had the space," he said.

Sports ministry officials said the stadium was now due to be completed by April and that they expected record profits from the two-week tournament with tickets going for an average \$40 each.



Roberto Baggio

Juventus want Baggio but not at any cost

SESTRIERE, Italy (R) — Italian club Juventus said they wanted to keep World Cup star Roberto Baggio but were unwilling to break the bank to do so.

Baggio's contract with Juventus expires at the end of the season and speculation has been rife that the striker could join a foreign club willing to stump up in excess of \$30 million to buy the player and pay his contract for three years.

"We want to keep Baggio," Antonio Grando, managing director of the Turin team, told ANSA News Agency in an interview from this Italian Alpine resort.

"But obviously we will not be able to compete with a Japanese club that eventually offered Roberto Baggio a \$30 million deal," he added.

Baggio, 27, has been hampered by injury this season but veteran striker Gianluca Vialli and rising star Alessandro Del Piero have more than made up for his absence.

The Turin team trails leader Parma by one point with a game in hand midway through the Serie A season.

Baggio, 1993 European player of the year, is due to return in a key match against Parma when action resumes on January 8.

'Eintracht used four foreigners in UEFA tie'

NAPLES (R) — Napoli have accused UEFA of breaching the rules that Eintracht Frankfurt used a fourth foreign player when the two teams met in a UEFA Cup match last month.

Eintracht won the third round tie 2-0 on aggregate.

Giuseppe Iodice, secretary-general of the Italian club, said the German team's use of four foreigners in the first leg on November 24 was Napoli's "biggest violation."

He said Komljenovic violated the rules by being an "unregistered" player, a foreigner who has played at least five years within a National Association, two of them at youth level — when he played for Yugoslavia's national team in the past few days.

Under UEFA rules, clubs are allowed three foreign players and two associated ones.

"Komljenovic lost his international status once he played for Yugoslavia against Brazil and Argentina," Iodice said. "He cannot take part in national games and be considered assimilated."

Komljenovic played alongside Peto Jan, Peto Ghasani, Anthony Yabosh and Nigerian Jay Jay Okocha when Eintracht beat Napoli 1-0 in the first leg.

Eintracht beat Napoli 1-0 again earlier this month to reach the quarter-finals.

Iodice said Italy's soccer federation had asked UEFA to look into the matter at Napoli's request and were awaiting a reply.

In October European soccer's governing body overturned the results of a UEFA Cup first leg match won 3-2 by CSKA Sofia against Juventus because the Bulgarian club had fielded a player who had not been registered with UEFA by the official deadline.

"There could be several solutions to this — repeat of the game, disqualification of the team — but whatever the case, UEFA will have to clear this up," Iodice said.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

China supercoach injured in car crash

BEIJING (R) — China's supercoach Ma Junyi was seriously hurt in a car crash in northeast China on Friday, a hospital official said Friday. "His life is not in danger," the official said by telephone from Nanchang. Ma was taken to a hospital in Wafangdian City, Liaoning Province.

Thursday night from Anshan, the family of Ma's father died on December 10, to his sports career. Ma's father died when his Mercedes Benz struck a tree on the road to the Beijing Evening News said. Ma said his father's head and had to have stitches, but his injuries were not serious, the newspaper said.

PAOK beat Red Star in Belgrade tournament

BELGRADE (R) — Leading Greek club PAOK Salonika beat Red Star of Belgrade 3-0 in the first match of a special tournament marked the first international tournament since the Yugoslav team since the 1990-91 season. The tournament was organized by the Yugoslav team since three months ago. The tournament was organized by the Yugoslav team since three months ago. The tournament was organized by the Yugoslav team since three months ago.

Sanders earns NFL defensive honours

NEW YORK (AFP) — Two-sport star Deion Sanders of the San Francisco 49ers has been voted National Football League defensive player of the year by sportswriters nationwide. Sanders, who joined San Francisco in September, after the players' strike, was named Major League Baseball season, easily beat out Oakland's outfielder and homebacker Greg Lloyd, both of whom were in the balloting. "It's a wonderful achievement," Sanders said. "Not for myself, but I think for (defensive) coach Bill Belichick, because he has been responsible for my development on my abilities, letting me play the way I'm playing. He's been a big part of my success. He put me in the right situation. Sanders had played all five of his previous NFL seasons with the Falcons in Atlanta, where he also did duty with the Braves baseball team.

Aintree hero Red Rum set for century

LONDON (R) — Triple Grand National winner Red Rum is 30 on New Year's Day — equivalent to around 100 human years. Red Rum won the Grand National in 1974 and 1977 and finished runner-up in 1975 and 1976. Racetracks rarely live to 30, but apart from one serious illness three years ago when he suffered a blacked-out attack, Red Rum has enjoyed good health. One devoted fan has hit on the idea of sending a gift-boxed single red rose to the horse on the day.

Goalkeeper scores with header

LISBON (R) — Belgian goalkeeper Guy Hubert saved Portugal's soccer team Estrela de Amadora from a defeat by Chaves Thursday night when he left his net in a late equalizer. Estrela de Amadora were 1-0 down in their first division game when Hubert moved upfield and headed home from a corner, giving his team a 1-1 draw. It was the first goal scored by a keeper in the Portuguese Championship this season.

Spurs ship Dumitrescu out to Sevilla

LONDON (AFP) — Tottenham's Romanian World Cup star the Dumitrescu is on his way to Spain and will spend the rest of the season on loan to Sevilla after Spurs chairman Alan Sugar did an about-turn to sanction the deal. Spurs originally insisted on a straightforward sale, wanting all their money back on the forward for whom former manager Ossie Ardiles paid 2.6 million pounds more than six months ago. Sugar at first turned down the Spanish club's offer to take him on loan, but has now relented, given Sevilla the option to make the move permanent at the end of the campaign. Dumitrescu scored five goals in 11 games in Ardiles's flamboyant attacking regime, but was the first victim of new manager Gerry Francis's army of White Hart Lane and asked to go on the transfer list earlier this month.

Famed Yankees pitcher Allie Reynolds dies

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (R) — Allie Reynolds, who pitched for six World Series championship teams with the New York Yankees has died. Reynolds, who had been undergoing treatment for cancer, was 79. Reynolds, a hard-throwing right-hander who was known as "Supercub" because of his American Indian ancestry, and his blazing fastball, compiled a 182-107 record with a 3.3 earned run average in 13 Major League seasons. He started his career in 1942 with the Cleveland Indians and after five seasons joined the Yankees in 1947, where he pitched until retirement after the 1954 season.

Sharpe to miss playoffs with neck injury

GREEN BAY (AFP) — Green Bay's star receiver Steve Sharpe will miss the playoffs with a neck injury, Green Bay Packers confirmed Friday. Sharpe will be missed by the Packers when they host Detroit in the first round of the National Football League playoffs Saturday. He caught 94 passes in the regular season for a total of 1,119 yards and 18 touchdowns. Packers doctor Patrick McKenzie said the injury involves loosening in Sharpe's two vertebrae. He said it was too soon to know if Sharpe's career was threatened. Sharpe was injured on December 6 against Atlanta when he hit his head on an opponent while blocking. He experienced tingling in his limbs and was in the second half.

Tasmania wins Sydney-Hobart yacht race

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian maxi yacht Tasmania won a tight finish to the 630 nautical mile Sydney-Hobart yacht race Thursday, arriving in Hobart shortly before 5:30 a.m. (1850 GMT). Close behind her was fellow Australian maxi Bridgetella, about half a nautical mile astern and racing to the line in the island state of Tasmania's capital at about eight knots. The 25.7 metre Tasmania's capital at about eight knots. The 25.7 metre Tasmania's capital at about eight knots. The 25.7 metre Tasmania's capital at about eight knots. The 25.7 metre Tasmania's capital at about eight knots.

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China pull out of swimming World Cup

BELING (R) — China have decided against competing in next week's opening World Cup swimming event in Hong Kong but an official said Friday the decision was not related to doping scandal surrounding the team.

"We planned to take part but the athletes were too tired after the Asian Games just eight weeks ago," Yuan Jiawei, vice-president of the Chinese Swimming Federation, said.

Beijing itself has already been dropped as a venue to the World Cup series because the meet organisers in the Chinese capital failed to confirm they would go ahead with it.

Yuan said China's swimmers had had insufficient time to recover since October's Asian Games in Hiroshima, Japan, and participation in Hong Kong would have disrupted training schedules at the start of a busy year.

He said the decision not to compete had nothing to do with revelations of drug abuse at the Hiroshima Games.

Seven swimmers were among 11 Chinese competitors banned after testing positive for the banned anabolic steroid dehydrotestosterone.

All 11 athletes were stripped of their Asian Games medals by the Olympic Committee of Asia.

The swimmers, who included women's world champions Yang Aihua and Lu Bin, were suspended for two years.

China has vowed to take steps to curb doping which it maintains is an isolated problem and not officially sanctioned or organised, as alleged by some trainers and athletes abroad.

Chinese swimmers have taken part in the World Cup series in the past but Yuan said the event produced little benefit in return for the disruption to training.

"The only benefit is that they have some experience in how to compete," he said.

Yuan said another reason for missing the Hong Kong meeting was that entry formalities for travel there were extremely complicated.

In Hong Kong, one of the organisers said he doubted visa difficulty was a factor since special arrangements to pick up visas on entry into the territory could have been made.

"At present... it may be embarrassing for them to send swimmers," Ronnie Wong, a member of the Hong Kong organising committee, said.

"I think there are other problems hindering their coming, maybe finances."

The Hong Kong event next Tuesday and Wednesday is the first of seven in the World Cup series of short-course (25-metre pool) meetings. The six others will be held in European venues between January 31 and February 19.

Germany's Franziska Van Almsick, world 200 metres freestyle champion, leads an entry of 74 swimmers from 16 countries and territories in Hong Kong.

Van Almsick set a 200 metres freestyle world short-course record at the Beijing World Cup meet two years ago and Wong hopes she will break the mark in Hong Kong.



Bernard Tapie

Tapie to stand trial

LILLE, France (R) — The legal troubles of bankrupt French businessman and ex-soccer boss Bernard Tapie worsened when a judge ordered him to stand trial in March on charges he rigged a soccer match, judicial sources said.

Judge Bernard Baffie said Tapie, ex-president of Olympique Marseille, would stand trial in the north French city of Valenciennes from March 13 to 21 charged with active corruption, a stiffer charge than the original one of complicity.

Tapie, a former cabinet minister in a Socialist-led government who was declared bankrupt two weeks ago, is suspected of a role in bribing league opponents Valenciennes to lose a key match in May 1993.

He will also be tried for allegedly influencing witnesses in the match-rigging scandal. Each of the charges carries jail terms of between one and three years.

Tapie denies any wrongdoing, also rejected charges that he illegally ran up massive debts in running his crumbling business empire.

A few days after the disputed match, which Marseille won 1-0, the club reached the peak of its success under Tapie's eight-year leadership by winning the European Cup.

Two weeks ago, Tapie stepped down as president of the club after soccer authorities banned him.

Five others implicated in the case will also stand trial in March, including former Olympique manager Jean-Pierre Bernes who also has been accused of active corruption.

Valecooeees players Christophe Robert and Jorge Burruchaga Christ will be charged with receiving bribes and Marseille player Jean-Jacques Eydelie will be charged with complicity along with Robert's wife, Marie-Christine Robert.

Jordan Handball Championship

Ahli maintain lead; Orthodoxi drop to 2nd division

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Titleholders Al Ahli ended their match by crushing Amman 40/18 Thursday in the 11th week of the Kingdom's Handball Championship.

Al Ahli/Amman 40/18: Al Ahli crushed Amman at the Sport Palace in an exciting match that gave Al Ahli another two-points to take the lead with 22 points in the overall standings.

Al Ahli experience and Amman's weak defence gave Al Ahli's Nabil Jamil, Iyad Abed Hameed and the wingers Mousa Abdallah and his brother Issa the chance to score and move freely, confusing Amman's defence who looked weak and unorganised to end the first half with 23/9 lead.

In the second half Al Ahli kept the pressure taking advantage of the unstable performance of Amman's players who tried to attack but in vain as the

match ended 40/18 for Al Ahli.

Al Salt/Yarmouk Shouneh 33/29: Meanwhile in another match Al Salt beat Yarmouk Shouneh in an exciting match from both sides.

Al Salt's Mohammad Hindawi and Imad Tadrous led the attacks successfully in spite of a lot of pressure from Y. Shouneh who looked determined to win. The first half ended in a tie 15/15.

In the second half Al Salt concentrated on quick attacks to leave Y. Shouneh trailing as they won the match 33/29.

Husseini/Orthodoxi 37-31: In another match Al Hussein pushed Orthodoxi to the second division after losing 10 matches.

Al Hussein's strong defence was enough to leave Al Orthodoxi in a dilemma, as Al Hussein scored an important 37-31 victory to remain fourth.

Standings

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts.
Ahli	12	11	—	1	420	276	22
Arabi	10	9	—	1	302	258	18
Salt	11	6	—	5	323	324	12
Husseini	11	4	1	6	289	314	9
Y. Shouneh	11	3	1	7	326	364	7
Amman	10	3	—	7	237	290	6
Orthodoxi	11	1	—	10	292	373	2

* Amman-Arabi have a postponed match.



Switzerland's Vreni Schneider on her way to her slalom win.

Slovenia's Hrovat ends Schneider's run

MERIBEL, France (R) — Slovenia's Urska Hrovat spoiled Vreni Schneider's run of success when she won the third slalom of the women's Alpine Skiing World Cup in Meribel Friday.

The 20-year-old Hrovat, whose only previous World Cup success was on home snow in Maribor last season, had a near-perfect second run and won in a combined time of one minute 20.15 seconds.

Schneider, the World Cup holder, had to be content with second place 0.09 seconds behind. She also lost

her unbeaten record in slaloms this season.

The 30-year-old Olympic champion would have taken the overall World Cup lead with a one-point advantage over compatriot Heidi Zeller if she had won.

"I overthought I could ski so well as I did today because of the rain," said Hrovat.

"I had problems at the start of the season because I had new skis but I'm improving with every race," she added.

The most gifted of the

young and impressive Slovenian team, she said it was a special pleasure to beat Schneider, who had won the last six slaloms she had entered.

"It gives me extra motivation because she is in such good shape at the moment. I hope there will be more victories like this one next year," she said.

France's Leila Picard, the sister of former super-giant Olympic champion Franck, shone on home snow, taking third place in 1:20.74, her best result in a slalom.

More of a giant-slalom specialist, she had only made it to the podium once before, in a giant in Cortina last year.

Australia's Anita Wachter, back in form after a back-to-back start to the season, was fourth in 1:20.78.

There were more bad news for Schneider as Germany's Katja Seizinger, the world's leading downhill specialist, showed she would also be able to score vital points in slaloms this season. She took eighth place in 1:22.19, her best result by far in a technical event.

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French pilot feared double hijacking

PARIS (Agencies) — A French pilot said on Friday he made an emergency take-off from Algiers airport at Christmas, fearing militants were planning to hijack his airliner along with an Air France jet just seized at the same airport.

The pilot for French domestic airline Air Inter told France-Info radio that the control tower had not warned him of the hijacking, even though he landed 30 minutes after the Air France Airbus A300 had been seized by hijackers.

The pilot, who did not give his name, said his plane, also an Airbus A300, landed on Saturday a half-hour behind schedule. Had he landed on time, he said, his plane could have been seized instead.

"If there were more of them, (the hijackers) could have split up and taken both planes," he added. "It could have ended up very badly."

The hijackers of the Air France jet shot dead three passengers before flying to Marseille where French commandos stormed the plane on Monday to end the 54-hour drama, killing all four guerrillas and freeing the 169 people on board.

As soon as the Air Inter plane came to a halt, Air France security staff boarded and told the pilot of the hostage-taking.

"The control tower never told us anything. If they had told us five or ten minutes earlier, I was just beginning my descent and I could have turned around immediately."

He said he disembarked his passengers and then took off immediately for the southern French city of Marseille, right across the Mediterranean, without refuelling or unloading the luggage on board.

Air Inter flight IT4210 left Marseille Saturday at 10:20 a.m. (0920 GMT) and landed in Algiers at 11:45 a.m. — 25 minutes behind its scheduled time of 11:20 a.m.

The hijacking of the Air France A-300 jet, with more than 200 passengers and crew on board, began at 11:18 a.m., according to Air France.

The revelations are bound to fuel doubts raised by French authorities about security at Algiers airport.

Earlier Air Inter confirmed

a report in the daily Le Figaro that the Air Inter plane took off without taking on new passengers or unloading the luggage of passengers who had just arrived.

But the airline did not know the exact reasons for the pilot's decision to make an emergency departure. "We are waiting for a security report," said a spokesman.

Le Figaro said Friday Algerian hardliners had planned to commandeer the Air Inter jetliner in addition to the Airbus-300 which they later hijacked to France.

Air Inter said the plane was only on the ground for 15 minutes. "The Air Inter plane was not threatened at any time," it said in a statement.

The airline said an Air France mechanic who had been about to board the hijacked jet learned of the danger and instead got on the Air Inter plane just before the doors closed.

The Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the most violent of Algerian fundamentalist groups, claimed responsibility for the hijacking.

France has been shocked by the ease with which the hijackers, loaded down with guns, grenades and sticks of dynamite, were able to walk on the plane under the nose of airport security just an hour's flying time from France.

Meanwhile, the crews of two French gas tankers bound for Algeria refused to dock on Thursday because they feared for their safety and turned their vessels back to France.

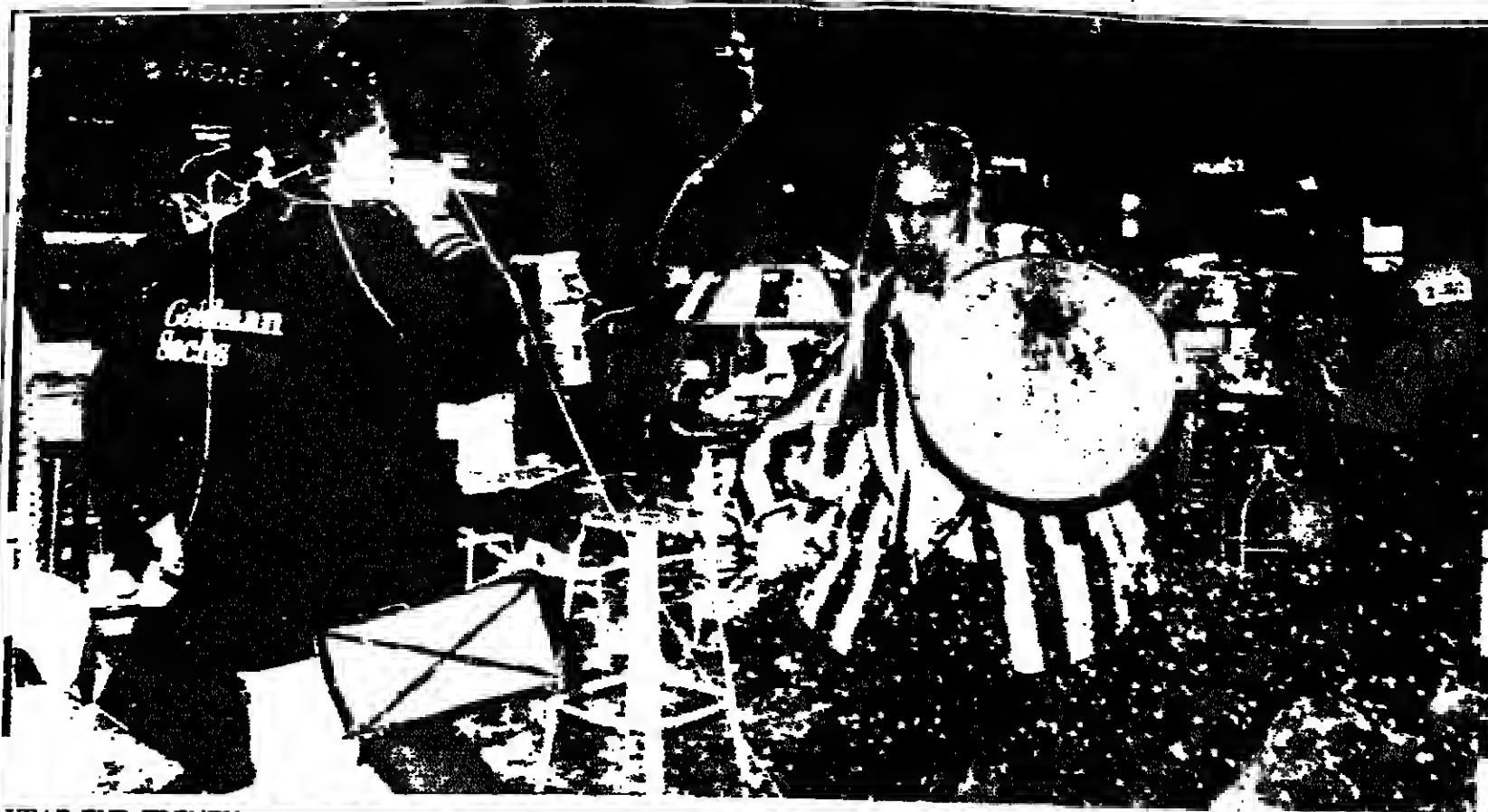
The communist-led CGT, the largest French labour union, said all freight shipments to Algeria should be suspended until Jan. 4 to allow better security measures to be set up.

Since the Christmas hijack, all French commercial airlines and ships have been banned from carrying passengers to Algeria.

Also on Thursday, investigators identified one of the hijackers as Mokheles, Be Guettat, 25, from El Arach in Algeria.

The three other bodies had yet to be formally identified

(Continued on page 3)



YEAR-END FRENZY: Traders on the Paris stock exchange celebrate on Friday the last trading day of the year, despite a 1% per cent overall annual drop (AFP photo)

Settlers wreck Palestinian-owned gas station

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Jewish settlers said on Friday they destroyed the foundation of a Palestinian-owned petrol station under construction in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, in an effort to bar Palestinians from building there.

David Alhanyani, a settlement leader in the West Bank's Jordan rift region, said the site was under settler jurisdiction, and Arab construction would not be allowed there.

But the army said the construction was legal.

"Some people decided to take action and yesterday late at night residents of the valley went out to the area along with heavy vehicles and wrecked the foundation of the gas station," Mr. Alhanyani said in a radio broadcast.

A Reuters camera crew on Friday filmed armed settlers directing a bulldozer that was uprooting the foundation. The settlers covered their faces to prevent identification.

The action coincided with Arab landowners' attempts to keep settlers from expanding a Jewish settlement near Bethlehem, a project that has threatened to bar Israeli-Palestinian Economic Organisation (E.O.) from the area.

The army's civil administration, in charge of the occupied West Bank, said the Palestinian owner of the petrol station site, Yusef Hanan, had full approval to build the station on the plot near the Jewish settlement of Meholah.

The gas station has all the necessary permits for construction at the location," said Elise Shazar, civil administration spokeswoman for the West Bank.

It was the second conflict over construction between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank this week.

Settlers and Israeli peace activists demonstrated that week at a hilltop near Bethlehem, where construction has begun on hundreds of new housing units for Jewish settlers. The project was approved by the previous

hardline Likud government. Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority says the construction threatens Israeli-PLO peace talks.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has asked the attorney general to examine legal ways to stop the building, but while the examination is conducted construction continues.

Israeli peace activists vowed to rally at the site on Friday despite an army order outlawing demonstrations.

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Rafsanjani denies clerical power feud

TEHRAN (R) — President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Friday denied that there was a power struggle among Iran's senior Shiite Muslim Ayatollahs.

In a mass prayer sermon, he dismissed as the "worst kind of injustice" reports that Iran's supreme political leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was making a push for becoming a "marja taglid" (source of emulation), the top Shiite clerical rank.

Many Iranian newspapers and influential clergymen have been promoting Ayatollah Khamenei as a new marja to fill the gap at the top of the Shiite clerical hierarchy since centennial Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Araki died a month ago.

Some officials and clerics said outsiders like Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, dismissed by the late leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as his designated successor in 1989, should not be allowed to become a marja.

A newspaper this week reported demonstrations against Ayatollah Montazeri in front of his home.

Mr. Rafsanjani, speaking publicly for the first time in the current debate, said Ayatollah Khamenei, whom he has known for 40 years, was unambitious and it took a lot of persuasion to make him accept the posts he held since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

"When Ayatollah Araki's illness became serious, we talked to Mr. Khamenei about becoming a marja because he did not want to accept the burden," Mr. Rafsanjani said.

"Now to distort facts and say that (Khamenei) pushed to become a marja or that there was a power struggle or that he felt superior is the worst kind of injustice."

Ayatollah Khamenei said two weeks ago that he would act as a marja for Shiites living outside Iran, but would prefer other qualified Ayatollahs to offer spiritual guidance to Iranian Shiites so that he could have time to attend to affairs.

Mr. Rafsanjani said in any case Ayatollah Khamenei's position as Iran's supreme political leader was much more important than that of a marja.

Under Iran's constitution, the supreme leader is the top state authority and has nearly unlimited policy-setting powers.

The marjas derive their influence from the allegiance and number of their followers who pay their religious taxes.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (right) listens as Saudi King Fahd (center) talks to Syrian President Hafez Al Assad in Alexandria on Thursday (AFP photo)

Syria hails Arab mini-summit

(Continued from page 1)

The summit talks came just two days after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin travelled to Oman, becoming the first Israeli head of government to visit a Gulf Arab state.

Syria has long opposed one-to-one deals between Israel and Arab countries and insists that only a global settlement can lead to a comprehensive peace.

"Syria failed in its aim to impose a joint Arab decision on the Gulf countries," said the daily Haaretz.

And the Maariv daily said the summit had not achieved the aim of slowing down "the Arab World's reconciliation" with the Jewish state.

"But we will have to wait to see if the public and secret decisions taken in Alexandria will dissuade Gulf countries from their rapprochement with us in the coming weeks," the paper added.

A Saudi official said after the summit that Riyadh had agreed to help slow the pace of Arab normalization with Israel, as long as there was no progress in Syria's peace talks with the Jewish state.

Talks between Israel and Syria have made no tangible progress since they were launched at the Madrid peace conference in October 1991.

They are deadlocked over the scope and timetable of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

In their summit statement, President Mubarak, President Assad and King Fahd also called on Iraq to implement U.N. resolutions for the sake of its people and Arab security.

In a statement given to reporters at the end of the summit, the three leaders said they wanted to achieve comprehensive peace in the region and had exerted sincere efforts to remove obstacles in the way of peace.

"The leaders stressed this peace must be based on U.N. resolutions 242, 338, 425 and the principle of land for

peace. In this regard, the leaders highly appreciate Syria's position and its serious efforts to make the peace process a success. They (leaders) stressed their firm support for Syria's just demands."

The support comes at a time when diplomats say Syria fears it is becoming increasingly isolated as Arabs break ranks to either sign separate peace deals or forge ties with Israel.

Syria, which has demanded a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, ended its latest round of peace talks last week saying no progress had been achieved.

Damascus has spoken out against the peace agreements between Jordan and the Palestinians struck with Israel.

It has also publicly criticized a decision earlier this year by the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council — of which Saudi Arabia is the most powerful member — to lift a 46-year-old economic boycott on firms that deal with Israel.

Mr. Assad and King Fahd arrived unexpectedly in Alexandria on Wednesday and held lengthy discussions with Mr. Mubarak on Wednesday and a brief meeting on Thursday.

The leaders urged the world community to work to remove obstacles that they said Israel placed in the path of the peace process and stressed their demands for regional arms control.

"In this regard the three leaders renew their requests for the setting up of a region free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, particularly nuclear weapons," they said.

Egypt, which became in 1979 the first Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel, has urged Arab states not to sign an extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty unless Israel signed.

Cairo has repeatedly urged Israel, which is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons, to sign the treaty but Israel has said it would

not do so as long as it faced a potential nuclear threat from other enemies such as Syria, Iraq and Iran.

The heads of state called on Iraq to fully comply with U.N. resolutions in order to alleviate its people's suffering and to boost security in the Arab World.

"The three leaders called on Iraq to complete the step it took by recognizing the independence of Kuwait and its borders by fully complying with all Security Council resolutions in this regard."

"This would help end the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people and create the appropriate atmosphere for boosting security and stability in the Arab World," they said.

The three leaders expressed their resolve to strengthen the 22-nation Arab League and its institutions to maintain its position as the "mother Arab organization in which Arabs work to fulfill their aims."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa told reporters Friday that "the summit was a big step in crystallising a joint Arab position, the results of which will become known during the next stage."

He said it would lead to "reactivating the Arab League."

One official close to the meeting said Thursday that the session could be the first step towards a summit of all Arab leaders. It would be the first such meeting since the Gulf war.

Meanwhile, an Iraqi diplomat, who insisted on anonymity, said "we are disappointed with the communiqué" because "it repeats the same U.N. Security Council position."

Kuwait on Friday welcomed the summit statement. Abdul Aziz Al Dakhil, planning minister and minister of state for cabinet affairs, said in a statement that Kuwait welcomed the calls made by the three leaders.

Protesters, troops clash

(Continued from page 1)

Troops pushed back the protesters, in some cases clubbing them. They arrested more than a dozen and imposed a curfew on Al Khader.

Dr. Tibi said troops provoked the demonstrators. "I am sorry to say maybe there were instructions to do so. Soldiers invaded 200 metres inside the demonstration and started to hit people, and this is the reason why the situation exploded," he told reporters.

"The army has behaved in a bad manner, by using force against the people who came to express their stand," said Israeli legislator Talah Al Sana, who was also jostled by troops as he stood linked arm-in-arm with Dr. Tibi.

Before the clashes, Mr. Arafat addressed the crowd by phone through a loudspeaker from his Gaza headquarters.

"My brothers, I appeal to you to continue on this stand in defence of this land for the sake of justice, for the sake of peace," he said.

Mr. Rabin trounced ex-Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's Likud in a 1992 election after pledging to stop most government funding for Jewish settlements, which Palestinians view as a provocation.

The hilltop has become a focal point for demonstrations against Jewish settlements in the West Bank, where more than 110,000 settlers live among 1.2 million Palestinians.

Palestinians are especially concerned Israel will form a ring of Jewish settlements around Jerusalem, the Arab half of which they see as the capital of a future state.

Palestinian Authority Secretary-General Tayeb Abdul Rahim told Reuters: "If Israel believes it can do whatever it wants without an Arab, an Islamic or an international reaction, it is dreaming."

The Palestinians are facing a "long and tough battle" over Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, Mr. Arafat warned Friday.

"I have just heard news that Israeli soldiers attacked the demonstration at El Khader village," he said in a speech at Al Azhar University.

"We are in a long, dangerous and tough battle. They (Israel) are trying to create new realities before the Palestinian authority moves to the West Bank," said Mr. Arafat.

"However they try to justify it, it is a clear violation of the peace agreement and we cannot accept it."

COLUMN

Tapie in trouble for hitting a policeman

POINTE-A-PITRE (AFP) — Embattled French politician and politician Bernard Tapie is in hot water again this time for allegedly hitting a policeman, a reliable source on this French Caribbean island said. The policeman, a detective, alleges Mr. Tapie hit him while he was talking out Mr. Tapie's house in the French section of the island of Saint-Martin, and has begun legal proceedings against Mr. Tapie.

"Tapie probably thought he was a policeman," a source told AFP. Mr. Tapie, a Euro-MP, was declared bankrupt by a Paris court on Dec. 14, a decision which bars him from public office for five years and wrecks his dream of standing for election as mayor of Marseille. He is appealing the decision.

"I've won the lottery, but don't tell anyone"

LONDON (R) — Britain's latest lottery winner claimed his £7.8 million (\$12 million) jackpot, but insisted on remaining anonymous, lottery organisers said. Four winners of smaller prizes of £340,000 (\$526,200) also told lottery organisers Camelot to keep their names secret. Bachelors among winners of the new National Lottery, which began only six weeks ago, follows a media frenzy caused when the largest prize so far — £17.8 million (\$27.55 million) — was announced three weeks ago and the winner demanded anonymity. News paper reporters besieged the home of a 41-year-old Indian immigrant after pinpointing him as the lucky winner. The newspapers then fought a court battle with Camelot, which is obliged to respect requests for anonymity, over whether they could print his name. The newspapers won, but most decided to respect his demand not to be named. But the company, a profit-making consortium which gives a share of the lottery takings to charity, was accused by members of parliament of leading the media to the jackpot winner. Since then, all winners have demanded anonymity. Lotteries in other countries such as Spain and the United States offer much higher payouts, but controversy rumbles on in Britain over the size of the top prizes. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, spiritual leader of millions of Anglicans worldwide, joined the fray, saying that the jackpots should be smaller.

French algae to help Japanese slim down

BREST, France (AFP) — A Japanese importer has ordered 17,000 cans of algae infusions made by Brest-based firm Océaly, for sale at Tokyo beauty institutes and diet food shops, Océaly said Wednesday. "The importer asked me to create a line of seven algae-based infusions, each with its own characteristics," said cosmeticologist and Océaly manager Fabienne Breslin. She used seven food algae which she combined with extracts of fruits, spices and other plants. She said the seven "infusions" have "calming" effects and help the takers slim down, promoting individual well-being. Breslin set up the company in June last year.

Drinkmaker's ad too much for Coca-Cola to bear

BOSTON (R) — The goliath of soft drinks took on David when Coca-Cola Co. sued a 112-year-old family-owned soft drink business to stop it from running television ads featuring a polar bear, Coca-Cola, the Atlanta-based multinational giant, filed an injunction in U.S. district court against Polar Corp., a soft drink maker in Worcester, Massachusetts. Polar said it has used a polar bear named Orson as its mascot for most of its history and ran an animated ad with a polar bear 17 years ago. Coca-Cola, in turn, has run ads featuring early 1900s

Scalfaro will try to avert snap polls

ROME (Agencies) — President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro indicated on Friday he was opposed to calling the snap general election being demanded by outgoing Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

In his first public acknowledgement of the seriousness of the political drama facing Italy, Mr. Scalfaro said he would need to hold a fresh round of talks with politicians to find a solution to the crisis sparked by Mr. Berlusconi's resignation last week.

Mr. Scalfaro said the first round of consultations provided "a clear and evident result: That a majority (in parliament) say 'no' to immediate elections."

He told reporters it was his duty to first seek a solution that could avoid new elections less than a year after Italians went to the polls.

Mr. Scalfaro said he would have to hold a second round, which political sources said will start after the New Year holiday.

His comments put him at loggerheads with Mr. Berlusconi, who has insisted that snap elections are the only way to solve the crisis that broke after his former allies in the federalist Northern League left his stormy coalition.

This week's talks revealed deadlock between an alliance of the media tycoon and his loyal partners in the hard right National Alliance on one side and most other forces in parliament on the other.

Mr. Berlusconi's camp says that any government that does not include them or involves the opposition would betray the voters who voted for the "freedom of choice" which won general elections last March.

Mr. Berlusconi's Forza Italia kept up its pressure on Scalfaro to appoint a caretaker government and said he spoke under the constraint of the constitution.

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